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AUTHOR Davies, David; Wheeler, Richard
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the feasibility and implications of awarding credit for traditional extramural studies courses throughout the United Kingdom (Credit Frameworks and Learning Outcomes Programme). The project's objectives were as follows: assess demand for and acceptability of credit among existing and potential students; test new forms of certification for learners in the liberal adult education tradition; develop and introduce employment-related credits for mature, work-based individuals as part of a certificate course; and contribute evidence and ideas to the United Kingdom's developing national credit frameworks and support the employment department's strategic research thereon. Among the study's key conclusions were the following: (1) broadening student constituencies in continuing education have necessitated a more adaptive and responsive credit system; (2) a learning outcomes approach and adoption of clear student assessment criteria will permit recognition of the fullest range of achievement for adult learners; (3) continuing education providers need to offer credit for appropriate learning whether it occurs at home, work, or college; (4) the award of credit is the start of a quality assurance cycle that includes moderation while allowing tutors a high degree of autonomy; and (5) collaborative networking of continuing education provision with other agencies is vital to gain progression and transfer opportunities for students. (Contains 24 references.) (MN)

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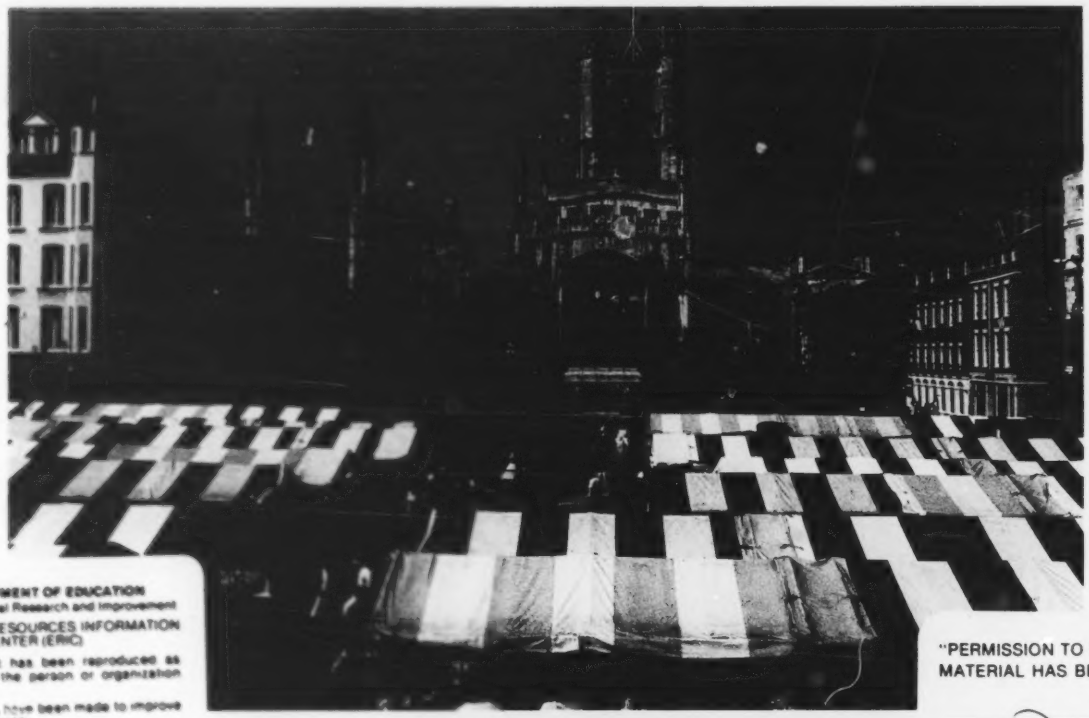
Project Report



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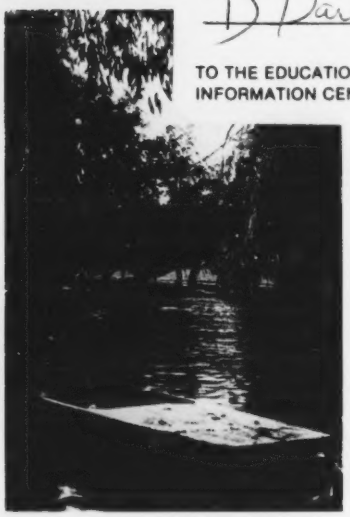

Employment Department
Credit Frameworks and Learning Outcomes Programme

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University of Cambridge Continuing Education

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Project Report

Employment Department
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FOREWORD

This Project is part of a wider movement in the world of adult liberal education in Britain and beyond which seeks to preserve liberal learning, yet transform it at the same time. Its starting point was the belief that liberal adult learning will endure whilst the traditional forms it assumes will change as society itself changes. The key theme of the Project was 'credit' for adult learners; the key context, that of change in how universities can provide non-traditional educational opportunities. The key agents were the students, tutors and educationalists who collaborate to produce those things not done elsewhere in the academy.

The Project team has shown that accredited courses can retain their essential character and that diverse learning can be integrated around the practice of reflection. It also believes it has demonstrated the potential of credit for rewarding learning in life and at work, as well as in the lecture room. Such learning is valued by adults **for its own sake** and is securely in the tradition of liberal adult education. The acceptance of credit will help promote a culture of change but change is rarely simple. The Project Report records resistance to some aspects of accreditation, whilst documenting unanimous support for the continuity of liberal learning provided by the University. We hope the Project, as a form of social analysis concentrating on broad patterns **and** on individual details, will help teachers and learners alike meet the challenges facing a learning society.

The 'Credit Where It's Due'' team wishes to thank those individuals and organisations who made a contribution to the success of the Project (*see Acknowledgements, p 59 for a full list*).

The team is indebted especially to the tutors who devised and tested courses for credit. Without their efforts and those of the students of Cambridge Local Centres and WEA branches, there could have been no Project at all. The Project's Tutor Group deserves acknowledgement for the many hours of effort they shared with us with no thought of material reward.

Guidance and support were given unstintingly by the Project Steering Committee who ensured we kept to our task and offered critical help and insights. The Department of Employment provided the financial support and demonstrated their commitment to the aims of the University - to support the widening of accreditation as part of a culture of opportunity for adult learners.

The Report was written by David Davies and Richard Wheeler, respectively Project Director and Research and Development Officer, with contributions from the team members, Lynne Caley, Shelley Lockwood and Vanessa Nedderman.

David Davies
Director of Public Programmes
University of Cambridge Board of Continuing Education

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I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Credit Where It's Due Project set out to examine the feasibility of awarding credit for traditional extra-mural studies courses, and the implications of doing this as part of a wider credit framework of relevance to adult learners.

The project was based on three premises:

1. Creative responses were needed to changes in the funding available for university-based adult education.
2. Learning opportunities for adults within the University sector would be increased through credit-based systems.
3. The Cambridge department's experience would yield evidence and analysis which would be useful to a wide audience of educators and students throughout the UK.

The project had four key objectives:

1. to assess the demand for and acceptability of credit among existing and potential students;
2. to test new forms of certification for learners in the liberal adult education (LAE) tradition;
3. to develop and introduce employment-related credits for mature, work-based individuals as part of a Certificate course;
4. to contribute evidence and thinking to the developing national credit frameworks and to support the Employment Department's strategic research in this field.

The project proposed that:

- dialogue between higher education, adult learners, teachers, funding agencies and local centres could be strengthened through recognition of the need to define and demonstrate the learning taking place in traditional courses;
- increasing numbers of adults entering higher education via continuing education courses can be encouraged to follow programmes of study based on the outcomes of courses. Such outcomes can lead to credit and qualifications, and include assessments which are compatible and commensurate with the traditions and standards of extra-mural education;
- adult learning and its assessment need not be confined to essays or examinations but should recognise the full range and diversity of achievement which existing liberal continuing education programmes represent. The project therefore tested a range of approaches and methods;
- with collaborative support from students, teachers and partners in provision, it is possible to implement a framework for accreditation which allows tutors in particular the academic freedom to decide how to assess students and recommend the award of credit without imposing a pattern or specific methodology.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

The project work points to the following conclusions:

1. THE DEMAND FOR AND ACCEPTABILITY OF CREDIT

Broadening student constituencies in continuing education have created a need for a more adaptive and responsive credit system. It is clear that a large proportion of the currently enrolled 350,000 adult students attending non-award bearing courses nationally can benefit from accredited Continuing Education (CE) provision. But understanding of, and attitudes towards, credit vary considerably, as shown by those students enrolled on the Board's courses during the life of the project. Many older, often already highly-educated, students have no obvious need for credit accumulation; other students accept accreditation as an integral part of higher education courses whilst others actively seek credit as a means to a recognised qualification for personal and career development.

See ***Assessment, Credit and Learning (14-16)***, ***The Demand for Credit (21-22)***, ***Continuing Education and Credit (23-24)*** *and* ***Student Perspectives (50-52)***.

2. OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

The fullest range of achievement for adult learners can be recognised through a learning outcomes approach to credit, and by the adoption of clear criteria for student assessment. User-friendly assessment can be integrated into the learning process and at the same time meet appropriate standards criteria.

See ***Methods: The Learning Outcomes Model (16-18)***, ***Learning Outcomes (24-25)***, ***Assessment Practice (32-35)*** *and* ***Assessment and Accreditation (41)***.

3. ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL CREDIT WITHIN CONTINUING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

There is no single site of learning, neither is learning restricted to a particular age or stage in life. Continuing education providers need to offer credit for appropriate learning wherever it takes place; at home, at work or at college. Accreditation for the full range of lifelong learning is possible, desirable and can be mapped onto certificated study programmes.

See ***Methods: The Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Learning (19)*** *and* ***Academic and Vocational Credit (35-37)***.

4. QUALITY AND STANDARDS: SYSTEMS, PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE FOR ASSURING QUALITY

The award of credit is the start of a cycle of quality assurance which includes moderation yet allows tutors a high degree of autonomy. The standards to be reached by students must have regard to the mission of the teaching institution, to comparable provision elsewhere and to the available resources. To enable university continuing education to be responsive to student needs and to link effectively with its community of learners, there must be clear procedures for the award and recording of credit and institutional involvement in advisory and guidance services.

See ***V Quality and Standards (39-43)***.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR APPROACHES TO TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Tutors are integral to the process of course design and delivery. The sheer variety of courses, subjects, settings and curricular approaches in continuing education and the fact that all CE students are non-standard in terms of age and/or social and educational background, means that no single approach to the learning process and assessment is appropriate. All models and styles of teaching need to build in elements of assessment as part of the process of learning and tutors must be recognised as key players in the process. However, students also need to be actively involved in the learning process if credit is to be an intrinsic part of their achievement.

*See **IV Curriculum Change (27-37).***

6. LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL NETWORKS

Collaborative networking of continuing education provision with other agencies is vital to gain progression and transfer opportunities for students. Project outcomes have included credit transfer agreements with other universities in the region, including the Open University. Regional credit consortia and credit frameworks alongside national tariff agreements are needed for long-term convergence of credit systems and for coherence. The rules by which credit can be accumulated and transferred towards an award must be clear in order to facilitate coherent patterns of study for students and to safeguard academic standards.

*See **The National and Local Contexts (11-12)**, **Curriculum Objectives of the Project (27)** and **Project Outcomes (47-48).***

7. CULTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

A Continuing Education credit culture challenges older traditions of exclusion within higher education and requires the democratic engagement and support of the student body. Turbulence may be experienced as resources are switched from older to newer provision.

*See **Accreditation as Cultural Change (12-13)**, **The Project as Change and Innovation (19-20)** and **Continuing Education and Credit (23-24).***

8. THE NEED FOR GUIDANCE

A key conclusion of the Project is the need for guidance arrangements if adult learners are to benefit from credit and use it for the purposes of access and progression. Credit arrangements and the dispersed nature of LAE provision place increased guidance responsibility on tutors. Staff development of tutors, course developers and managers is needed. However, duplication of guidance services better provided elsewhere should be avoided.

*See **Assessment, Credit and Learning (14-16)** and **The Need for Guidance (54-55).***

9. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

Staff development has a key role to play in the implementation of accreditation processes. These processes are demanding in human, material and financial terms. There must be recognition of the changing role of the

tutor and institutions need to be responsive to staff needs in planning future development programmes.

*See **Project Outcomes (47-49)** and **The Need for Staff Development (55)**.*

CONCLUSION - THE LEARNER'S WORLD

The purposes of liberal adult education are not negated by credit but they do require to be restated. Credit is about measuring achievement in learning and is an increasingly significant part of student progression and opportunity. Accredited liberal adult education is about liberating talent and energy in new and modern ways. It should continue to create access to intellectual life that would not otherwise be available for most people.

II OVERVIEW: THE PROJECT AND ITS CONTEXT

The National and Local Contexts

The Project must be seen both in the context of national, regional and local developments in adult and continuing education, and in the context of national developments in higher education as a whole, with reference to credit frameworks, assessment, and teaching and learning processes. The recent HEQC Report (1994) *Choosing to Change: Extending Access, Choice and Mobility in Higher Education* has focused attention on the credit frameworks issue. The potential of a learning outcomes model as a basis for the measurement of learning in higher education has been summarised in the UDACE Report (Otter, 1992) and other recent works provide a national context of debate and innovation within a rapidly changing and developing higher education system (Employment Department, 1993; Entwistle, 1992; Eraut, 1994). It is clear that projects in Credit Frameworks and Learning Outcomes and in the accreditation of Work Based Learning (including the Cambridge Project), funded by the Employment Department, are an important part of this process. The Project team therefore sought to draw upon and contribute to these national debates and developments.

Furthermore, as the only project in the programme which is concerned with adult and continuing education, it took account of concerns that are specific to this important and diverse sector of educational provision. The decision to bring to an end the special, separate and ear-marked funding of university liberal adult education (LAE), and the requirement to link future funding to the accreditation of demonstrable learning outcomes in LAE, sent shock waves through the world of adult and continuing education which are still affecting providers, staff and students, up and down the country (HEFCE 3/94; Duke, 1994).

'Mainstreaming' of the funding for adult education courses means ensuring that students are studying on courses which lead to qualifications or to credits, which are themselves part qualifications. Almost all universities in England and in the other regions of Britain which made traditional provision for adults have adopted the CNAA-derived HE CATS points system, leading to certificates, diplomas and (eventually) to degrees. Since there are extensive partnership arrangements in the delivery of LAE provision between university departments and the WEA, the effect of FEFC, as well as HEFCE, policies on the latter provide another essential context for the universities' moves towards accreditation.

Traditional extra-mural provision seems set to survive across the country as an accredited scheme, yielding credits for a huge and amazingly diverse range of learning opportunities which will be firmly part of the 'qualifications society'. The process of accreditation is, however, fraught with structural, philosophical and cultural problems. The Cambridge Project was concerned with the feasibility of change on the ground in a local context, to enlarge educational opportunity for adults through regional and national credit agreements and to contribute to the national process of accrediting LAE. It must be acknowledged at the outset that this remains distinctly problematic to many adult educators and to many students who represent the traditional clientele of university extra-mural classes.

As the oldest provider of adult 'extension' education in the country (since 1873), it is perhaps fitting that the Cambridge Board of Continuing Education should

be at the centre of an Employment Department Project to innovate in the accreditation of its LAE programme. Prior to the Project, the Board had already taken a lead in exploring changes that would be necessary in order to offer to traditional adult students courses which lead to qualifications or credits that can in turn be accumulated towards a higher award. This was essentially the purpose of a short FEU Project carried out in 1993-94 (March 1994). It is important to emphasise that the present Employment Department Project remains essentially a **feasibility** study with the following primary aims:

1. to test the relevance and applicability of existing models of credit or 'credit frameworks' for traditional students attending University extra-mural classes;

2. to explore the integration of vocational credits with academic credits within an intermediate qualification of the Board at University Certificate Level / GNVQ Level 3/4.

The Board has developed a framework for the award of a new Certificate of Continuing Education recognising the learning that takes place on 20-hour courses (10 weeks of 2 hours per week, or comparable residential courses), for which 10 credits may be awarded, or a 40-hour course (20 weeks of 2 hours per week) for which 20 credits may be awarded. A total of 60 credit points is the basis for the award of the Certificate which can count towards the first year of an Open University degree. Mutual recognition of credit has been agreed with Departments of Continuing Education at the Universities of Oxford, East Anglia and Essex and with the Open University. The South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC) Project in the Employment Department programme has also facilitated regional credit arrangements. Whilst progress had been made, at least at the policy level, towards developing a broad framework for the award of credit to adult learners, the Project was concerned with feasibility through trial implementation of some 40 pilot courses and Madingley residential weekend and Summer University provision. The full implementation phase of the accreditation of the LAE programme will take place in 1995-6 with the move to accreditation of some 350 courses involving approximately 7000 students.

Accreditation as Cultural Change

The long tradition of adult and continuing education has been rooted in an ideology that knowledge for its own sake was the rationale for what universities did extra-murally. Personal interest and the flowering of the intellect justified the existence and expansion of a world of learning and pleasure for those unable to attend university in the usual way. Within this rich mixture, of course, there were streams of critical thinking and dialogues with emerging alternatives. The insights of political economy and critical historical, sociological and literary studies associated with E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Michael Young were accompanied by those of modern educationalists such as Keith Jackson, Tom Lovett and Brian Simon. Adult education in universities has been about social change and transformations as much as it has been about personal fulfilment. There are those who would argue, moreover, that the two are in no way opposed but are in fact complementary features of an unrecognised but uniquely valuable form of educational opportunity, copied but not matched the world over!

The 1990s saw a very different emphasis emerge on the nature and justification of that form of adult education being offered by the older universities. Publicly-

funded provision came under the aegis of the Government's funding agencies and the merging of polytechnics into a unified higher education sector saw the emergence and swiftly developing prominence of alternative viewpoints. The dimensions of social, professional and career relevance came to the fore: learning had to be demonstrated by reference to outcomes and products. This does not seem altogether unreasonable where publicly-funded provision is involved. At its most benign, it meant that educators had to begin to demonstrate what they had always asserted took place as a result of adult education courses, i.e. **learning**. In principle, surely there is no reason why demonstrating learning outcomes or their relevance to role, career or vocational development is any less educative than learning for its own sake as part of personal growth? It can be argued that it is the divisions that have historically been drawn between the two that have bedevilled any attempts to develop a cohesive and genuinely open culture of lifelong learning.

These are weighty matters, but they do have a connection with the present Project, not only in the context of HEFCE 'mainstreaming' of LAE and its funding implications, but in a more fundamental sense in integrating it into a national framework of part-time provision of higher and further education. In this context, the accreditation of traditional LAE is part of a wider and pervasive shift in educational policy towards the rationalisation of publicly-funded post-compulsory education. It is also at the same time a development of a type of public accountability achieved by measuring the outcomes of learning. Adult education is now conceived as part of an educational system embracing a skills and knowledge framework capable of contributing to the local and national economy, as well as to the concerns and needs of the individual. In the context of a burgeoning 'market' for skills and knowledge, personal development and vocational relevance are two sides of a single coin.

The recognition of individual achievement through credits and qualifications actually empowers the person by offering a currency which can be traded in for opportunities for furthering learning or for employment. Learners in adult and continuing education now have an opportunity to have their achievements acknowledged. The sense of entitlement may soon parallel conventional HE undergraduate students who have legitimate expectancies about what they can do to secure careers with their degrees. The Project was therefore conceived as an opportunity to recognise learning as it currently takes place in diverse settings and to enlarge educational opportunity by creating a framework within which LAE students can achieve and progress.

The Project: Aims, Objectives, Tasks

The shift in values already alluded to and the swift implementation of new funding policy towards university adult and continuing education provides the focus for the Cambridge Credit Project. The key objectives were focused on the **processes** of accrediting LAE courses in everything from archaeology to zoology. Included also were questions of the appropriate modes of attendance for adult learners gaining credit and the issue of appropriate assessment of such learners. Adult learners on LAE courses come in a variety of shapes and sizes; uniformity does not characterise the system. Off-campus learning, residential learning, distance and open learning, counselling and guidance, quality assurance, age cohort diversity, rurality, inner-city deprivation and partnership with local **democratically-constituted** groups and centres as well as schools, colleges, LEAs and national statutory and voluntary bodies are all involved in course generation, presentation and evaluation. The **system** within which adult

education occurs is therefore complex, diverse and contains significant elements of spontaneity. Even at its most stringently organised, its courses change on an annual basis. It does, in Tom Peters' words, 'thrive on chaos'.

The task of the Project was to examine the Cambridge programme of courses for the public and to test processes and procedures designed to make accreditation work on the ground. Inevitably the Project also tested concepts and ways of thinking about credit and accreditation. The wider notion of a 'Framework for Credit' or a 'Qualifications Framework' has always been in the background and helped the Project team begin to formulate answers to the often-levelled question, 'what can you do with these credits?'. One particular riposte was that you could not leave them to your grandchildren, could you, so what use were they for a third age student? Indeed the educational needs of the retired, growing in number and importance, have been brought sharply into focus by the credit debate, especially as the Board has a large number of third age students enrolled on its courses.

The second aim of the Project was to test the feasibility of a Cambridge course offering both vocational and academic credit. This particular initiative, it was anticipated, would draw on what was widely known, but not formally acknowledged, about the composition of many certificated adult education classes, that is, that they contain many students who come to learn for vocational purposes and whose motives combine learning for its own sake with an occupational interest. In significant respects the reality of a learning society has overtaken the rhetoric and individuals are actually gaining and using personal transferable skills. The Project's task, however, was to try to define what skills and knowledge are most appropriate. Project activity has made it possible to derive a skills framework, at least in outline form, for continuing education, a framework which embraces both personal development and social and professional relevance.

Assessment, Credit and Learning

For the existing LAE programme, the key task was to find a means of assessing student learning as a basis for the award of credit without detracting from, indeed hopefully enhancing, the educational experience of students.

Over the last 15 years, university LAE has become associated with a curriculum model dominated by a concern to specify course content and subject matter with less obvious attention to teaching and learning processes or other curriculum issues. An older tradition of university LAE work, in existence up to the end of the 1970s, emphasised the requirement that students should engage in written and/or practical work as a key element in extra-mural classes. A University of London Extra-Mural Department statement c.1979 encapsulates this tradition:

> *'Regular written work by the students has always been an essential feature of university tutorial and sessional classes. When students first enrol for a university class, they sign an undertaking to do the written work that the tutor may require them to do. It would be strange if a class that was entitled to be called 'university' did not involve some writing or similar work by students'*

The statement goes on to emphasise the centrality of written work as a means of ordering the thoughts of the learner and of consolidating learning, and adds a note on the benefits to the tutor of student work. The tutor 'receives [the work]

as a clear indication of the extent to which his teaching and the class itself is a success'.

> '[the tutor] *can tell how much of the subject is being absorbed by the students and, much more important, how effectively their minds are being opened by the benefit of what a good tutorial class should always become - a joint voyage of intellectual discovery*'

It is clear that traditional student assignments, which were so firmly embedded in LAE extra-mural work, pre-date by many years the debate about the award of credit and the requirement for accountability from the funding agencies, but appear to have fallen by the wayside over the last 15 years. The evidence of the Project is that many students now regard the requirement to submit work for assessment as a major psychological barrier, associated in the minds of many with memories of compulsory, formal education and, for some, with the failures of the past. The voluntary nature of attendance at LAE classes, and an association of assessment with additional work and the threat of failure, do not fit easily with a concept of learning for pleasure and a pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

It is evident that to seek to reimpose the older tradition of assessable written work at a stroke would be doomed to failure and would drive away large numbers of students who would, at the very least, be reluctant learners and, at worst, be confused and hostile. The introduction of 'user-friendly' but effective forms of assessment, integral to the teaching/learning process and related to, rather than isolated from, other elements of the LAE curriculum, was another key Project task. It was clear to the Project team that this concern was shared by most of the traditional university providers of adult education. In fact, it became clear that it was **the issue** and the *sine qua non* of the accreditation task facing the sector.

Since evidence of student scepticism and hostility was matched by that of staff, staff development became the starting point for this area of the Project. In the last 15 years or so, staff have grown accustomed to an LAE curriculum which has not generally included an assessment requirement. Freedom from assessment has not only meant freedom from an onerous and demanding element of most post-16 provision, but has also facilitated an adult model of teaching, free from the judgmental nature of the tutor/student relationship. The challenge to tutors is now to incorporate into the teaching/learning process assessment methods which engage students in problem-solving activities, thereby enhancing rather than diminishing their educational experience of LAE classes.

For the University of Cambridge Board of Continuing Education, as for other LAE providers, a system of provision which has grown increasingly diverse with relatively little bureaucratisation is now set to make much greater demands on central services, especially in the areas of record-keeping, student guidance, quality assurance and staff development. Accreditation procedures need to be formalised and, most importantly, effectively communicated to a geographically dispersed and diverse body of part-time tutors. Since there is a significant tradition of joint university/WEA class provision, procedures must also take account of WEA practice, itself changing rapidly in response to similar demands for accountability from the funding agencies (see Daines, 1994).

Above all, it is evident that changes associated with accreditation appear, both to students and to staff, to represent change imposed from above. Whilst members of the Project team appealed to both constituencies not to 'shoot the

messenger', and pointed to changes in every sector of the education system right across the country, there was an inevitable tendency to believe that apparently unwelcome developments derived principally from a local *eminence grise*, without reference to wider national policy. The question addressed by the Project team was whether the opportunity can be taken to set the changes associated with accreditation in a 'value-added' context, and make assessment integral to the educational experience of students, rather than threatening and external to it.

Methods: The Learning Outcomes Model

The central strategy was to adopt a 'learning outcomes' model, specifying what each student is expected to know, understand or do as a result of the course of study. Outcomes have been 'quantified' within the national CATS scheme using widely accepted HE credit tariff volumes and notional study time as a working basis. This process is not yet an exact science by any means and this project shares the national uncertainty about credit values and volumes. Applying learning outcomes to some 50 courses as part of the pilot had major consequences for syllabus construction. Tutors were asked to rewrite their course descriptions and syllabuses and to use them as a means of making students aware of the learning objectives of the course. This was particularly sensitive where centres and partners in provision, such as the WEA, have an active tradition of negotiating course content.

Syllabus Construction

In order to facilitate the process of accreditation, the Board redefined the way in which course syllabuses are written; tutors were asked to provide a detailed syllabus indicating the aims and objectives of the course, the proposed learning outcomes for students, the teaching approach the tutor intends to take and the suggested methods of assessment. The tutor was asked to use this syllabus to negotiate the detailed learning outcomes of the course and the assessment activities with students at the start of the course.

The common element in all the Board's courses is the process of learning. It is the specification of learning outcomes which is the key to accreditation across the range of courses and subjects offered. A learning outcome may be defined as something that a person would be expected to know or to understand or be able to do as the result of a specific learning experience. Once this is defined, it is possible to assess the learning that has taken place. Learning outcomes are written in both general and specific terms and may focus on three areas:

1. Knowledge and understanding of academic content of the course.
2. Skills - often implicit rather than explicit, for example problem-solving, communication and inter-personal skills.
3. Personal development - this is often an intangible but keenly felt outcome, for example, enhanced self-awareness, personal confidence and learner autonomy.

Courses may have a variety of outcomes, some of which may be unintended and unexpected. The aim of adopting this system is to encourage students to reflect both on what they know and what they can do as a result of their course. It also provides a method of assessing explicit achievements across the full range of subjects and disciplines taught within LAE programmes and is a means of ensuring comparability of standards.

The Personal Statement of Learning

Once the quality assurance procedures of the University have been applied to course design, and outcomes have been successfully negotiated with students groups, each class member is asked towards the end of their course, to record their achievement on a Personal Statement of Learning (PSL). The PSL lists the planned learning outcomes and provides a means of encouraging students to reflect on their learning and to consider the extent to which they have met the learning outcomes. This particular document is the key to the 'contract' between the learner and the University. Students are encouraged through this procedure to take greater responsibility for their own learning, to agree the learning objectives of their own courses and, perhaps most importantly, to be actively engaged in the classroom.

The PSL records learning and assessment and helps switch the emphasis away from a content-laden and tutor-dominated environment to one where students have greater opportunities to recognise their own achievements. It records the type and amount of personal study and the assessment tasks undertaken by the student and also records the volume of credit awarded for successful completion of the course. This then is the record of attainment **and** at the same time the indication of progression possibilities within adult and continuing education. In order for students to reap the full benefits of this approach, they must of course be made aware of the opportunities available to them.

Guidance

The moves toward accreditation, the development of modular courses and the creation of an operational credit accumulation and transfer scheme have all contributed to a greater awareness of the need for guidance and better information for students. As yet, the Board has no personnel with a specific guidance role and at present students seek information informally from tutors. Tutors are employed by the University for their expertise in a particular subject and most have little or no experience of formal guidance. The advice given is therefore largely dependant on the goodwill and understanding of the tutor and is likely to vary in quality. Due to the extended structure of the Board's provision, the Board is heavily reliant on its tutors to advise and inform students because they act as the major point of contact between the University and its adult students.

Staff development, not only for teaching and assessment but also for student guidance, is vital for all concerned with the delivery of the Board's programmes to ensure a collective understanding of the experience and expectation of the non-traditional learner. It is clear that there also needs to be a central referral point to which students and tutors can turn, during the life of a course, for advice and information.

The Board, like the majority of higher education providers, is facing a period of change as the pace of movement towards a mass system of higher education increases. This system must, it is recognised, be underpinned by comprehensive, effective and impartial guidance and learner support systems. The Robertson Report, *Choosing to Change* (1994), stated that if extended choice, created through modularity and credit accumulation and transfer, is to be successful, it must be informed choice. In order for the Board's students (current and future) to benefit significantly from the new educational opportunities on offer, the Board must take account of the need for guidance and for providing better information for students. This can be both written and oral but needs to be properly resourced and managed and open to all students.

Assessment

There are sound educational reasons for assessment, for example to consolidate learning, to provide a basis for feedback to students and to offer a focus for problem-solving analysis, either in class or in private study time. Under the Cambridge scheme, students are assessed in accordance with three key criteria:

1. attendance at, and participation in, the class for at least two-thirds of the sessions;
2. completion of a Personal Statement of Learning verified by the tutor;
3. successful completion of specified assessment tasks or activities of an individual nature or assessed within a group context.

For a twenty week course students are expected to complete two assignments or activities and for a ten week course or a residential weekend, one assignment or activity. Assignments, which may take the form of written work or other learning activities appropriate to the course, are negotiated by the tutor with students after consultation with the Board of Continuing Education. Possible methods of assessment could include a seminar presentation confirmed by written notes, course work, a journal, an individual or group project, a visual presentation, field work activity or a tape recording. This is not an exhaustive list.

To qualify for the award of credit, students are required to reach a minimum standard of Level 1 CATS (i.e. first year undergraduate level). It is envisaged that those students whose work does not reach this standard may receive, if they wish, a Certificate of Achievement, in recognition of their learning on the course. Precise grades are not used to measure student achievement - there will be two levels of achievement, *credit awarded* and *course completed but credit not awarded*. However, tutors will be expected to feed back to students an indication of the quality of their work in relation to the Level 1 CATS standard.

Tutor Verification

The tutor will verify the Personal Statement of Learning once completed and also confirm by ticking the relevant boxes on the bottom of the form that the student has submitted the necessary assignments and is recommended for the award of credit. PSLs are returned to students at the end of the course and these act as the student's personal course record. Three sets of PSLs and relevant assignments from each course are kept for moderation purposes. As far as reporting to the Board of Continuing Education is concerned, tutors are asked to complete a proforma which testifies to the student's satisfactory attendance, the completion of the Personal Statement of Learning (PSL) and satisfactory completion of the tutor assigned task(s).

By the end of the pilot year, the PSL and the associated processes for registration and recording credit will have been implemented on some 50 courses. The viability of the procedures and the acceptability of 'new' assessment methods will have been tested with students, tutors and partner organisations. A record and transcript of credit for adult students will have been modelled along with the administrative and quality assurance procedures required by internal and external authorities. All of which requires training of staff and the development of appropriate skills workshops and events for full-time and part-time tutors, course managers, administrators and partners in provision.

Methods: The Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Learning

If the first aim of the Project was to test the relevance and applicability of credit for traditional LAE students, the second aim was to explore the integration of vocational and academic credit in the context of a new Certificate qualification. This second area of activity was at the planning stage during the Project year. Collaboration between the Public Programmes Division and Programme for Industry (another of the Board's divisions) resulted in a new Certificate in Personal and Professional Development which is due to be launched during the 1995-96 academic year.

The Certificate builds upon the experience of the Board's provision of academically focused part-time Certificate courses, some of which already have vocational relevance. These are accredited within the HE CATS framework at varying levels, from 1 to 3. In gathering evidence for the Project, it became apparent that in many cases students were enrolling for Certificate courses for vocational purposes, i.e. students were using the learning they had gained on the course to support their activity in the workplace. The market for Certificate students is both individual and corporate. In the former case the focus on **personal** development in the context of a Learning Society seems yet to be fully exploited. In the case of the corporate market, **professional** development is widely recognised as both the basis of a Learning Organisation and a key to career advancement.

Informal discussion with local employers led the Project team to believe that a programme of study which offered employees the opportunity to gain academic credit, and which had concomitant vocational relevance, would be well received. An approach was made to CambsTEC to test the feasibility of developing a scheme which would be congruent with both credit frameworks. The local labour market was examined and employers in the public and private sectors were canvassed for their views.

A series of seminars, under the title 'Moving On: Education, Training and Employment', was held at Madingley Hall during 1994-5, hosted by the Board of Continuing Education in collaboration with CambsTEC. Their purpose was to bring together employers, trainers and educators in the region; to invite eminent guest speakers to lead debate on current issues and concerns in education and training; and to provide a context for planning the Certificate in Personal and Professional Development.

Distinguished speakers included Dr Gilbert Jessup, Deputy Chief Executive NCVQ; Baroness Pauline Perry, President, Lucy Cavendish College; Roy Harrison, Head of CBI Training Policy Group and John Berkeley, Manager - Education and Careers, Rover plc. Each seminar attracted around 30 participants and it became apparent that a programme of study which would widen the credit base obtainable by students would make a significant impact in the region. Discussion between participants at the seminars contributed significantly to the development phase of the new Certificate programme.

The Project as Change and Innovation

The significance of the Project as a case study in the process of change in higher education may be viewed in several contexts. In the broadest sense, its outcomes represent a contribution to the debate about the nature and purposes of the emergent enlarged system of higher education, with specific reference to the

place of university adult and continuing education in a Learning Society. This Project contributes specifically to debates surrounding issues raised by Duke (1992), Robertson (1994) and UACE (1994). In this macro context, accreditation of existing provision represents the creation of an important framework within which opportunities for adult learners can be enlarged through greater recognition of individual achievement and the facilitation of progression.

The change process, as indicated in the Project Evaluation, suggests that the opportunity costs of this kind of intervention in the system are significant, and that the initial perception of many existing students is that of losses rather than of gains. But this need not necessarily be so if the process of accreditation can be used to stimulate curriculum change which enhances rather than diminishes the educational experience of students (see chapter IV). Furthermore, it is important not to lose sight of the needs of those older students for whom the acquisition of credit has no immediate attraction. Indeed, the Project team recognises that sustaining individuals' social participation and motivation in the third age is one of the most critical issues facing society and it remains a major concern of the Cambridge Board of Continuing Education and other University Continuing Education (UCE) providers. At the same time, it may be argued that innovation in the accreditation of both academic and vocational learning may be as, if not more, important to a new potential adult learning constituency than to the existing one, and in the long run those who are at present outside the system may be among the chief gainers.

Thus the change process at the macro level can be seen in the response of one university provider of adult and continuing education to policy changes associated with Government interventions. These have sought to change or modify the objectives, systems, actions and outcomes of public service provision against a background of competing priorities for scarce resources. In seeking to secure a continuation of public funding for adult and continuing education, the Cambridge Board is responding to Government policy that is not always evident to staff and students on the ground. From this perspective the Project represents an innovatory response to external pressures and to policy changes imposed from above.

Turning from the macro to the micro context, the Project is a case study of curriculum change in adult and continuing education. One of the key findings of the Project is that accreditation may have positive implications for teaching and learning, especially where the assessment process can be incorporated into what may be defined as the 'interactive classroom'. The model of curriculum change may therefore be a positive force in contributing to 'added value', and it was certainly the intention of the Project team to use accreditation to enhance rather than diminish the educational experience of the Board's students.

In the context of innovation theory and practice, the Project team had few guidelines or models as to strategy other than to adopt a pragmatic approach to the task in hand. Most of the work on innovation strategy in higher education, conveniently summarised by Becher (1992), is concerned with the conventional university context, drawing on various traditions in the social sciences such as the anthropology and sociology of innovation, public policy implementation research and political models of organisational change. Although the Project yielded evidence of change to some extent in all of these areas, the extra-mural nature of adult and continuing education provision means that the effects of change in this instance are peculiarly dispersed and diffuse. The Project team therefore adopted a pragmatic approach, recognising that change is in the hands of staff and students in diverse settings and over a wide region.

III ACCREDITATION ISSUES

Credit

As the world of Continuing Education undergoes major changes in its funding and to its place in the scheme of things, it is inevitable that some of those involved as learners and teachers feel threatened. On the other hand the increased importance of accreditation will be seen by many as an opportunity to move further along the road to an authentic and democratic higher education system which offers opportunities for lifelong learning.

Accreditation within University Continuing Education departments now means the use of credit as an intrinsic feature of learning and teaching. Continuing Education departments offer lifelong, award-bearing continuing education as part of their ongoing principles of accessibility and opportunity. These opportunities to acquire credit-based qualifications are new and are imperfectly formed, yet they undeniably constitute a step forward to a more open and flexible education for adult learners.

Defining Credit

One of the major objectives of this project was to introduce credit to traditional adult education courses as a powerful tool for change. Change is often painful and disruptive to established ways of doing things. A key issue was therefore to conceptualise credit in ways people could support and to view credit as a means of recognising and rewarding learning achievement. The project therefore accepted that credit is a type of currency which does the following:

- enables all learning to be given value wherever it takes place;
- facilitates the measurement of learning;
- allows students to transfer their learning across boundaries of time and place.

Credit can therefore support both democratic and progressive learning. It provides students with rights and opportunities to decide their own learning careers. Greater choice should lead to a more open and learner-centred system. Since continuing education has always embraced the principles of freedom of choice and the negotiated curriculum, it is likely that as credit issues become more familiar there will be greater recognition of the benefits and opportunities which can be opened up by credit.

The Demand for Credit

If one were simply to ask adult students in the traditional university 'extra-mural' departments 'would you like to study for credits?', then from many the answer would undoubtedly be 'no!'. Credits represent foreign goods imported into the liberal adult tradition. However, it is equally clear that as CE begins to incorporate very different kinds of learning activities, it will be necessary to deliver customised versions of what students want. Learning takes place on short courses, long courses, at work, in professional contexts, at home and in residential settings - all of which now require integrating into an award-bearing structure.

The Cambridge Board of Continuing Education was faced with the challenge of offering credit as an educational currency which would provide both a robust structure, through commonly agreed standards, and flexibility, through the offer of modules and courses which could be combined into educational programmes. The programmes would not be demanded yet would be demand-led and therefore part of the Project's task was to convince the users of the benefits of credit so that learners would begin to exercise their choices in favour of, rather than in antipathy to, credit.

In a credit system learning is central and choice is the means by which institutions guarantee a negotiated learning path for a student. Students, it is asserted, set their own goals and accumulate credit towards the achievement of those goals, which can only be realised in the context of a wider framework.

Credit Frameworks

There are well-developed frameworks for credit in both further and higher education. The Cambridge Project evolved initially out of an FEU initiative which encouraged the University to review and evaluate both the level of knowledge of credit systems amongst its staff and students and the acceptability of credit to adult learners. Knowledge and acceptability were both at a low level when the Project began its work. In part, the story of the Project is that of the unfolding of the issue of credit and the adaptation to a process of change by staff, students and the institution itself.

The higher education system of credit is often referred to as HE CATS and is based on a framework derived from the traditional academic year. A year equates to 120 credit points at one of three undergraduate levels which are specified for credit purposes, followed by level M for Masters degree programmes. The tariff is 360 credits for a degree with at least 120 at level 3. The further education framework is based on notional learning time, a credit being of 30 hours of notional learning time at one of four levels. Vocational courses are set within the NCVQ framework which allows only national vocational qualifications to count towards its awards and as a system it is therefore 'closed' to other forms of achievement. Although the Project set out with no definitive commitment to any single framework, it became clear very early on that the HE CATS framework would be the predominant influence for Cambridge. However, the NCVQ framework was also clearly seen to be of future significance for professional and vocational credit.

Using Credit

The perspective of the Project was shaped by the belief that when students and staff were thoroughly familiar with credit they would begin to see it as a tool they could use, rather than as an administrative strait-jacket. Having established during the lifetime of the Project that funding would in the future only be generally available for credit-rated courses, it became ever more certain that students and staff would need to understand credit at a deeper level and accommodate themselves to the processes and procedures needed to introduce and sustain a credit-based programme of courses for a large number of students.

The crucial elements of a credit-based system remain and have been summarised (Allen, 1993) as:

- **utility**, to both staff and students;

- **appropriateness**, allowing difference and diversity;
- **empowerment**, providing ownership for those who deliver and relevance for those who receive;
- **self-interest**, ensuring value to staff as well as to students.

Both staff and students needed to be made aware of these features of a credit-based system within the specific environment of the Cambridge department and its traditions of providing adult education for over 120 years.

Staff development was judged to be crucial in developing and implementing a strategy for change based on credit. Whilst ownership is always an issue in externally derived change, especially where resources and funding are at stake, it was also the case that many continuing education **students** had entrenched views on the unacceptability of credit or, more accurately, of the assessment requirements of credit-based courses.

For both students and staff the implementation of credit was problematic. And although it may be clear that there is now acceptance of credit-based courses by many traditional adult students, there is also a residual resentment and resistance which surely time alone will overcome. The position of the Project on this contested terrain remained steadfast: credit as an agency of change can confer much power on practitioners and supports the 'thinking student' who wants to exercise choice. This position unites the principles of professional autonomy for the teacher and self-interest for the student.

Continuing Education and Credit

Continuing education for credit in the liberal tradition exists to create access to intellectual life that would not otherwise be available to most people. In so doing it gives value to what teachers and students already do and achieve. One of the major concerns expressed in the findings of the Project, however, was that implementing credit may well distort what tutors do and how students learn. This is a genuine and heartfelt concern but, as developers and providers, the practitioners wished to find the positive outcomes for staff and particularly for students.

The Cambridge accreditation scheme was developed to cover conventional short courses or extension work, longer specialised named Certificates, Access work, residential courses, summer schools and off-campus learning which was experiential and work-based. The intention is that all the Board of Continuing Education courses for the public will be accredited. Students can opt to take the assessments devised for each course and gain the credits. The choice of whether to claim or use the credits rests with the students.

There is evidence from the Project and from far beyond it that many students want to study for credit when they understand what it is and how it can benefit their study. Without knowledge and experience of credit there is apathy and even antipathy towards it. The lesson yielded through the Cambridge experience is that a culture of credit has to be built so that students understand what it is for and how to use it. If this condition is fulfilled it is difficult to see how credit can be anything other than a benefit to the student and an enhancement of the opportunities to learn and to achieve.

The majority of people in higher education are no longer traditional 18-20 year-old students. The majority are mature adults, many of whom want alternative

qualifications; many, if not most, are part-time and still many others want their studies to connect with vocational opportunities. The lifelong learners are already within the academy. Credit is an intrinsic part of this picture, and continuing education is now both an alternative way of delivering education and part of an 'exploded' culture of higher education no longer containable within the walls of the institution. Credit is a vital part of the permeability of institutional provision of continuing education. It is a tool which can help practitioners define and meet the needs of present and future generations of learners. In so doing, credit helps us respond to a fundamental human need for knowledge and at the same moment helps us define a new role for continuing education at the centre of adult learning rather than at the periphery.

Learning Outcomes

Degree-level studies in continuing education at Cambridge have described students' achievements, and the basis for awarding credit, through learning outcomes. The traditional **process** of higher education was thought inadequate to describe what students achieved in the range of courses on offer in university adult education. The Project was able to build upon the Board of Continuing Education's previous adoption of a credit framework requiring a strong focus on what students learned, understood and could do as a result of attending the course and completing its assessment requirements. Through outcomes, credit can be more directly linked to explicit achievement. Further benefits of the approach are the increased potential for recognising previous learning and learning achieved outside formal classroom settings, all objectives set by the department for its students and courses.

Having decided that learning outcomes would necessarily serve as a basis for measuring students' achievement and awarding credit, it was felt by the Project team that the process of accreditation should be collaborative and involve learners, teachers, partner providers and local centres. Consultation and collaboration on this scale brought a range of issues and challenges into prominence.

The Project identified several key issues of concern to teachers, providers and developers of continuing education. Further work is required on some of these issues and they constitute a development agenda for Cambridge as well as many other HE providers in the continuing education field.

There are a number of approaches to the definition of outcomes; they may be based on key learning objectives, subject or discipline based knowledge, competencies and capabilities and the intellectual and personal and professional skills which are intrinsic to the learning process. No single approach has been adopted, yet the challenge presented by credit based on skills as well as on content has presented traditional teachers and learners with a sizeable agenda for action. The Project found that some academic staff were not well placed to set and assess some of the outcomes regarded as crucial to higher education study. Assessment proved to be a major concern to practically all tutors of adults connected with the Project, and staff development was identified as one of the keys to progress.

The diversity of purposes and methods in continuing education demands that outcomes be expressed in different forms. Nevertheless the project substantiated the need to make learning outcomes more explicit and to assess them using specific criteria which are shared with students. This procedure is especially

important for adults who have a tradition of negotiating their learning with a tutor. It is equally important in helping establish standards required in the accreditation of learning. Performance criteria were not imposed by the Project's methodology, rather each tutor was asked to set out assessment requirements in relation to what students would be expected to know or be able to do as a result of their course

Describing learning outcomes is not only helpful to tutors; the process helps the learner to identify previous learning relevant to the current course **and** to be reflective. The procedures tested in the Project were aimed in particular at fostering this practice of reflection. The Personal Statement of Learning was devised precisely with this in mind. It was proposed that identifying existing learning is an essential element in the development of the learner. An outcomes approach, plus the opportunity for the student to reflect, presented a significant challenge to traditional models of teaching and learning focused exclusively on content. For many tutors the issue is not yet resolved and the jury may still be out. However, there is increasing understanding and commitment to a collaborative approach which allows outcomes to be clearly described, to have public standards attached to them and be capable of being assessed in the variety of ways appropriate to adult education courses.

IV CURRICULUM CHANGE

Curriculum Objectives of the Project

The challenge to the Project team was to explore the feasibility of accrediting the learning that takes place on existing LAE courses, and the potential for accrediting vocational as well as academic learning. There was recognition from an early stage that this would only be possible through a pilot programme which encouraged tutors to experiment with teaching and learning strategies and different forms of assessment, according to subject, context (for example length of course), and student expectations. The outcomes and lessons yielded in these areas would subsequently inform University policy and practice (and hopefully that of other providers) and would meet the commitments in the Project proposal to:

1. produce and test a limited number of accredited courses;
2. define outcomes and assessment modes, including the credit rating of the courses as examples of good practice;
3. develop a Certificate course embracing vocational and academic credits.

The curriculum implications of credit frameworks have not been widely acknowledged. However, one of the major outcomes of the Project has been a recognition that the process of accreditation requires a model of curriculum development which takes account both of the traditions of LAE and of fundamental issues of teaching and learning in higher education. Liberal adult education, it can be argued, needs to be in the mainstream of higher education in a curricular, as well as in a funding sense.

Elements of a Curriculum Model in Higher Education

At an early stage, the Project team identified a number of elements of a curriculum model, common to all courses in higher education, of which account needed to be taken in the pilot courses, see Fig 1.

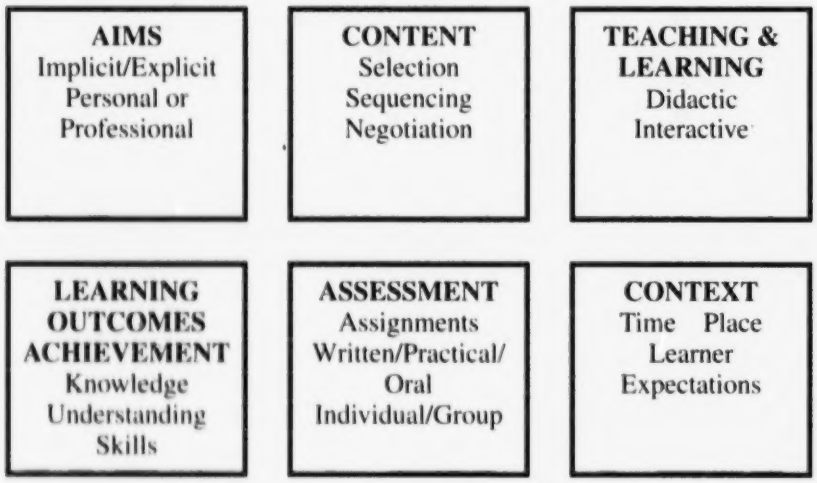


Fig 1: Elements of a Curriculum Model in HE

Since one objective of the Project was to explore the feasibility of a credit framework for LAE, it was agreed that there needed to be a balance between elements in the framework which would be common to all, and the avoidance of prescription wherever possible, for example, in the areas of appropriate forms of assessment, and teaching and learning methods. Allowing for diversity of response, there had nevertheless to be a number of common elements of principle and practice as a basis for the award of credit, across diverse courses and settings. At a minimum, the framework would require:

1. a common format for the presentation of syllabuses, under a number of agreed headings;
2. guidance on the amount of assessable work according to length of course, e.g. two assignments for a 20-week course; one for a 10-week course; one for a residential weekend;
3. acceptance of the principle that assessment should be closely linked to planned learning outcomes (discussed with students at the beginning of their courses), as a basis for the award of credit (see Fig 2);
4. a requirement that students, as mature and experienced adults, should be encouraged to reflect on their own learning, and record at the end of the course the degree to which they themselves felt that they had progressed in terms of the planned learning outcomes.

An early influence on the Project team was the accreditation model, summarised in Fig 2, which derives from the pioneering UDACE Report (Otter, 1992) *Learning Outcomes in Higher Education*.

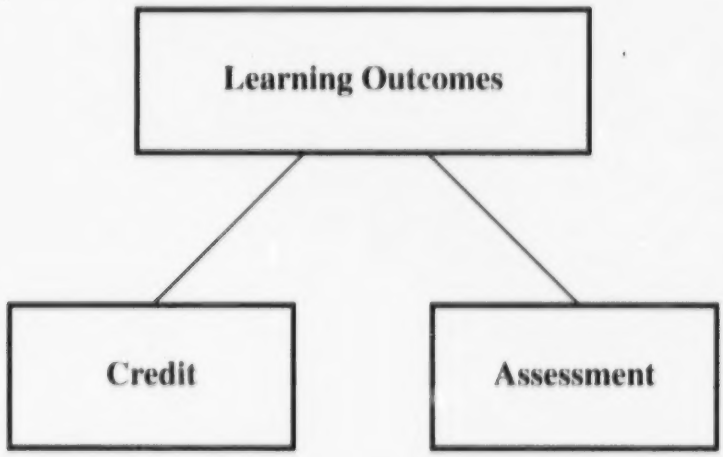


Fig 2: Starting Points - Learning Outcomes in Higher Education (UDACE, 1992, p81)

The model summarises the key components of the accreditation process but does not address a range of wider curriculum issues which the Project team identified at an early stage.

It was decided therefore that staff development would be directed towards raising tutor awareness of such issues, especially the concept of learning outcomes and their assessment, without discarding the concern with process which has distinctive elements traditionally associated with LAE provision.

Internally, a starting point for the Project was necessarily the curriculum model as revealed in the documents through which existing courses were described. These were mostly focused on content and subject matter, reflecting the traditional concern of LAE with the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and were often subject to some element of negotiation between tutor and student. There was minimal attention to course aims, which were usually inferred or implicit, rather than explicit; there was little reference to the teaching and learning process, and no reference to assessment or outcomes. Fig 3 summarises this traditional model.

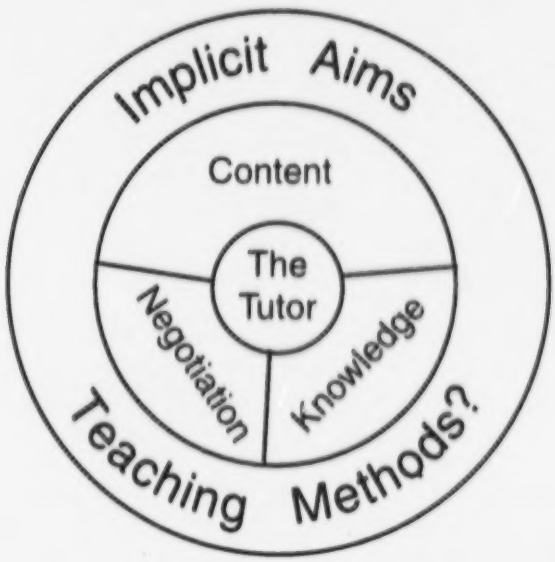


Fig 3: Starting Points - A Traditional LAE Curriculum Model

The first task was to ask tutors to spell out the aims of the course, to specify planned learning outcomes or, in a phrase preferred by some, learning achievement, and to identify methods of assessment linked to aims and outcomes. It soon became clear that the introduction of an assessment element had strong implications for the teaching and learning process. Fears about the introduction of assessment had been integral to the reservations and hostility towards accreditation expressed by students. If assessment was experienced as external, imposed, and threatening, it would remain alien to adult learners. If it could be integrated more closely into the teaching/learning process, it would be likely to be much less of a barrier to the acceptance of accreditation. Tutors, therefore, were asked to devise methods of assessment which might be described as 'user-friendly', as well as clearly related to aims and planned outcomes.

Central to the process was the concept of the 'reflective learner'. Towards the close of a course, the Personal Statement of Learning (PSL) enables the student to reflect upon and record their learning and achievement, and becomes both the record of attainment **and**, at the same time, the indication of progression possibilities within adult and continuing education. Parallel to the work of the Project, the WEA has piloted a framework for 'describing' student achievement in response to a request from the FEFC to demonstrate that worthwhile learning takes place in WEA courses (see Daines J, 1994; and WEA, 1994-5). Since a significant proportion of the Board's 'extension' courses are offered in

collaboration with WEA branches, the Project team has sought to take account of these developments in their own work.

The PSL is a developed version of the WEA proforma, and in the case of Board courses, is an additional and supplementary piece of learning evidence. In fact, it has come to occupy a key position in the implementation of a 'learning outcomes' model specifying and recording what each student is expected to know, understand and do as a result of their course of study. The PSL becomes the key to the 'contract' between the learner and the University Board of Continuing Education. It records the type and amount of personal study, the assessment undertaken by the student and records the volume of credit awarded for successful achievement.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

Models of teaching and learning have been much debated in the literature on curriculum development in higher education, ranging from the didactic to the interactive, and embracing models of the teacher as an expert and source of authority, as well as the teacher as a facilitator of learning and of interactive group work. There are certainly some students who attend LAE classes essentially to listen to an authoritative discourse by a lecturer and indeed there are some situations where the size of the class (for example, classes of 40 and upwards) means that the format is clearly a formal lecture or presentation of slides, followed by questions. At the other end of the continuum, there is a strong tradition of student interaction and debate, and often, eg in Local History, a tradition of students working individually or in groups, analysing and interpreting a variety of source material. Fig 4 (Model A) summarises these positions, along a continuum, perceived by both staff and students.

(1) Staff View

Teacher as Expert/Authority	*Teacher as Facilitator*
Didactic/Lecture	Group Work/Interaction Discussion

(2) Student View

Teacher as Expert/Authority	*Teacher as Facilitator*
Listen and inwardly digest	Participate/contribute
Individual learner	Interactive group
Silent (passive?) learner	Active/vocal learners

Fig 4: Teaching and Learning for Adult Learners: Model A

One factor which most tutors find problematic, however, is the requirement, for purposes of credit, to build in arrangements for assessment. Thus, the teacher takes on an assessment role (as in Fig 5, Model B) and some tutors have commented that the requirement to be an assessor as well as a teacher not only imposes additional burdens on both staff and students, but interferes with the staff/student relationship. This is particularly so where the introduction of assessment is a contentious issue in the context of the move to accreditation, and where freedom from assessment has been a valued and distinguishing mark of LAE classes in the recent past.

(1) Staff View

Teacher as Expert/Authority	*Teacher as Facilitator*
Didactic/Lecture	Group Work/Interaction Discussion

Teacher as Assessor
Out-of-Class Assignments In-Class Assignments
Recommendation of Credit

(2) Student View

Teacher as Expert/Authority	*Teacher as Facilitator*
Listen and inwardly digest	Participate/contribute
Individual learner	Interactive group
Silent (passive?) learner	Active/vocal learners

Fig 5: Teaching and Learning for Adult Learners: Model B

It is evident that it is much more difficult to build assessment into the teaching/learning process in the 'teacher as expert/didactic tradition' than in the 'teacher as facilitator/interactive context'. The former lends itself essentially to written or practical work, often a conventional essay, undertaken outside the classroom, and there have been some sound examples of this kind of assessment. The interactive model lends itself to assessment of problem-solving activities undertaken in the classroom, conducted 'on the spot' which encourages student participation and full integration into the teaching/learning process.

A Curriculum Model for Accredited LAE Provision

A variety of approaches to teaching and learning, and to assessment, were used on the pilot courses, and different approaches were sometimes incorporated within the same course. It may be helpful, in clarifying the issues to summarise diagrammatically (Fig 6) a possible curriculum model for accredited LAE provision, which has been one of the outcomes of the Project. At the heart of a credit based curriculum is the student (Figs 6 and 7 (**1**)), but equally, it must of course be acknowledged that the tutor has a key role to play in the teaching/learning process (Figs 6 and 7 (**2**)).

It is the outcomes of student learning that are assessed for the purposes of the award of credit (Figs 6 and 7 (**3**)). The student makes a significant contribution to the assessment process through the PSL, recording both personal experience of the course and the extent to which the student feels that the learning outcomes have been met (Figs 6 and 7 (**4**)).

Fig 7 summarises the emerging model for the award of credit, using a circular format to emphasise the integrated nature of the whole process and the inter-relationship of the distinct elements. It is the tutor's responsibility to ensure that assignments for the purposes of assessment reflect the planned outcomes of learning. Assignments may be written, practical or oral; they may be set in the context of individual or group work, and may be in-class (in an interactive setting) or out-of-class, where a more didactic teaching method, or the size of group, precludes on-the-spot assessment (Fig 7 (**5**)). One of the lessons of the Project is that the assessment of outcomes for the award of credit must derive

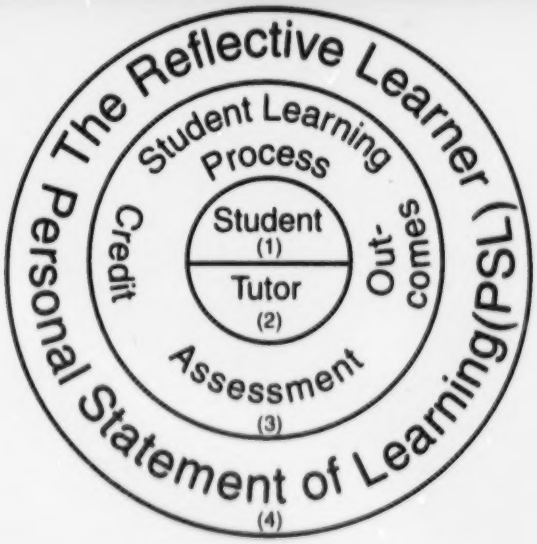


Fig 6: Starting Points for a Curriculum Model for Accredited LAE Provision

from, and reflect, the aims, subject matter, and learning context, and must not be isolated from them (Fig 7 (**6**)).

The outer circle focuses on the quality assurance procedures which must take account of all the curriculum elements and of the accreditation process itself in which the tutor has a key role to play. It is the tutor who is responsible for the verification of the learning that has taken place, not only through assignments, but as recorded on the PSL, which then becomes the basis for the recommendation of credit. Quality is assured through tutor verification, moderation of course work by an internal and external evaluator, and in due course by external audit (Fig 7 (**7**)).

Assessment Practice

One of the most significant outcomes of the pilot courses was the variety of assessment practice emerging from the initiatives and experimental approaches of tutors in the various disciplines. From the beginning, tutors were encouraged to be flexible and innovative, as well as sensitive to student fears about assessment. A long list of exemplars of possible forms of assessment were provided in the early stages although they were sometimes interpreted, wrongly, as prescriptive, and in other cases were rejected out of hand on the grounds, it was argued, that there was only one way to assess at university level - the written essay. Whilst good examples of essay style assessment were produced, there was also a great variety of other approaches, most notably with respect to in-class assessment.

Thus, the PSL invites students at the end of their course to make a note of **how** they demonstrated 'success' in meeting learning outcomes by ringing such listed items as: 'class oral work/seminar presentation; course work - written or practical; profile/journal/portfolio; project/group project; diary/log book; agreed assessment task; objective test; exhibition/visual presentation; student directed self-assessment; field work activity; tape recording; stimulation/role play; peer assessment; other...'

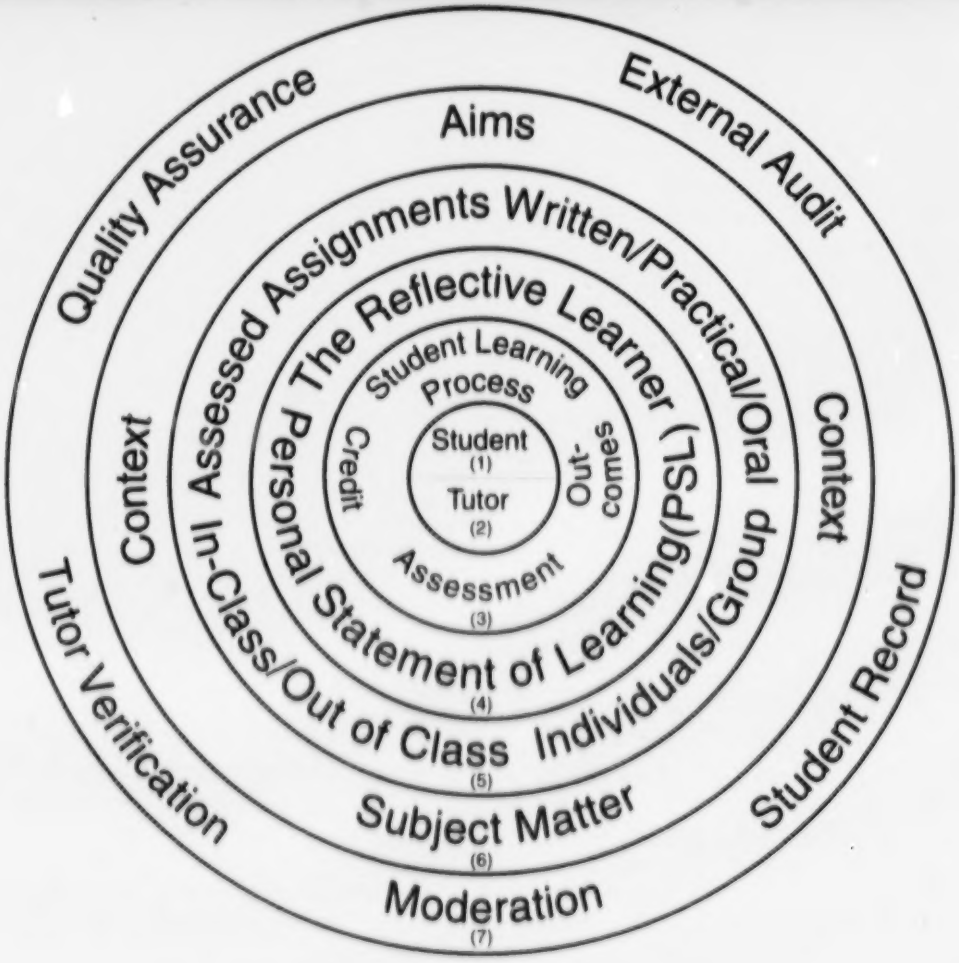


Fig 7: The Emerging Model for the Award of Credit: Summary

The form that assessment takes depends a good deal on three factors - the nature of the subject and the traditions of assessment in the field; the traditions of teaching and learning in LAE classes in the subject; and the teaching styles of individual tutors. Exemplars of assessment practice were one of the major outcomes of the Project. The following examples indicate the range:

Architecture: photographic survey following field visits, based on collaborative work involving self-generating student groups, outside class time.

Art: practical work of various kinds, for display or exhibition purposes.

Art History: an in-class 'quiz' exercise based on slides similar, but not identical to those used in-class; and an out-of-class analysis of visual evidence in galleries.

Botany: the development of descriptive and analytical frameworks for the study of wild flowers, e.g. Key Charts for Leaves, Poppies etc.

Field Archaeology: analysis of documentary and visual source material provided by the tutor, an in-class 'quiz', assessed in a group work context, based on similar material to that previously studied; and practical work which has even included the skinning of a rabbit using prehistoric implements! The example has a number of interesting features. The class had traditionally been a 10-week lecture class; students initially found the prospect of participative groupwork somewhat off-putting, but by the close of the course commented very positively about the interactive nature of the groupwork and the enjoyment that had been gained from the assessable class based exercises.

Geology: structured questions on the identification of specimens, following field work, and various in-class and out-of-class practical assignments.

History: essay assignments; and exercises in the analysis of historical source material.

Literature/Drama: essays; and oral presentations by members of the class on agreed topics; personal journals and commentaries of a descriptive and analytical kind.

Local History: the development of exemplar questions for the description and analysis of parish churches; the analysis of local source material, and the development of individual files focusing on aspects of an urban area over time.

Music: multiple choice questions ranging over previously considered pieces and styles.

There appear to be a number of lessons from the variety of approaches to assessment as revealed through the pilot courses:

1. whatever mode is adopted, it is clear that it involves an increase in workload for tutors, either through the setting and marking of assignments which are completed out-of-class, or through the preparation of source material with a related framework for analysis in class;
2. each of these modes, particularly in-class assessment, makes great demands on the skills of the teacher especially, if in the latter case, it involves assessment of group activities;
3. staff and students bring with them expectations from previous experience which are unlikely to change rapidly, even after staff development activities on the one hand, and student experience on the other - change is a long-term rather than a short-term process;
4. there are definite resource implications in terms of additional tutor time, and in the interactive model, in the provision of visual and documentary source material for analysis in class;
5. the psychological barrier of assessment, particularly for older students, may be overcome if it takes on a problem-solving dimension which proves to be a stimulating and enjoyable part of the educational experience;
6. nevertheless, some staff, and students, fear that the introduction of assessment will change the tutor/student relationship for the worse;

7. the larger the class - e.g. some classes are so popular that they are in excess of 40 or 50 students - the more difficult it is to build assessment into class work, especially where the size of class dictates a weekly lecture format and makes it difficult for the tutor to get to know students individually, or to discuss with them the possibilities of out-of-class assignments;

8. the more limited the facilities - e.g. absence of tables and other equipment - the more difficult it is to engage in practical activities that may be assessed;

9. if assessment is to become an integral part of LAE classes, students need guidance on criteria and what is expected of them, e.g. the difference between a descriptive and an analytical approach to course work;

10. the greater the age of the student cohort, the less obvious is the appeal of credit and related assessment which might lead to further qualifications;

11. assessment generates its own bureaucracy, form filling, and record keeping which must be taken into account in estimating the costs as well as the benefits of a credit framework;

12. assessment raises issues of tutor judgement and verification of the learning that takes place, and ultimately questions of quality and standards, which may be particularly difficult in such a diverse field of activity as adult and continuing education.

There is now a substantial literature on more flexible approaches to the assessment of learning in higher education (see, for example, Atkins et al 1993, Brown and Knight 1994, Brown, Rust and Gibbs 1994 and Ecclestone 1994), and it is important that the benefits of these perspectives, both practical and theoretical, are brought to bear with reference to the challenges of accreditation in adult and continuing education. In a practical sense, Project outcomes are a contribution to the diversification of assessment practice which is an essential part of the credit debate.

Assessment has a critical role to play in curriculum development within a credit framework. Section VI of the Report places assessment issues within the wider context of overall Project evaluation.

Academic and Vocational Credit

Curriculum innovation in the area of personal and professional development was one of the longer term outcomes of the Project. The accreditation of academic and vocational learning is a major issue on the agenda of higher education in the second half of the 1990s (see Lloyd-Langton and Portwood 1994). The response of the Public Programmes Division, in collaboration with the Cambridge Programme for Industry, derives from the Project proposal to test the feasibility of a Certificate in Personal and Professional Development which will enable both academic and vocational learning to be accredited within an HE CATS framework.

Even within the LAE tradition, it is evident that many students make their study choices for reasons of vocational relevance, as well as personal development. Consultation with students, tutors, employers, trainers and Professional Bodies suggests that there is scope for a programme which brings together academic and vocational learning, and seeks to bridge the classic British divide of knowing and doing, understanding and competence, as demonstrated in the currently separate academic and vocational frameworks - HE CATS, Professional Bodies and NVQ/GNVQ.

The rationale for the Cambridge Certificate initiative is summarised in Fig 8.

Fig 8: Certificate in Personal and Professional Development

The Certificate seeks to develop critical understanding and reflection on practice, drawing on the traditions of both academic study and vocational training. The intention is that it should be available part-time, over a period of two to five years, and be accredited within the HE CATS scheme with 120 credits at level 2-3. It is anticipated that students will be able to transfer the learning that takes place to provide underpinning knowledge and understanding in their professional context. The majority of students are likely to be in employment, and may well be funded by the employer. However, employment is not a pre-requisite, and students may wish to study for personal development reasons only.

In order to address most effectively the disparate needs of individuals and employers, a generic core is offered with specialist/professional options. Nine core modules are proposed, offered in clusters of three, being of varying complexity and specialism. The combination of personal choice and professional relevance is a key feature. The course may be taken at a speed determined by the student within a minimum period of two years part-time study and a maximum of five. It is intended that students within the region should be able to study at locally provided classes, or that a cohort of students, distributed nationally, could benefit from the programme by attending residential courses, on a regular basis, supplemented by elements of distance learning. A programme for national delivery would require further development and might consistute a second phase of the programme.

In developing an element of project-based learning, account has been taken of higher level NVQ requirements, as well as other professional awards, to allow maximum synergy for individuals and companies. The series of Breakfast Seminars, held at Madingley Hall with the support of CambsTEC in the autumn of 1994, provided an excellent opportunity to engage in a dialogue on issues of education, training and employment which underpin the rationale of the Certificate programme. Employers will be involved in ongoing discussions on course content, structure and teaching methods appropriate to relevant professional awards, and will be closely involved in the development and assessment of the work-based project elements.

The Project proposal has stimulated the developmental work which underlies curriculum development, itself coterminous with the national debate about NVQs and GNVQs at the higher levels. As standards are published by Lead Bodies for higher level NVQs, and advanced GNVQs are developed, the

programme will need to be refined. For example, a key component may be the core skills element currently associated with the GNVQ initiative. The Board is aware of the need to ensure that coordination between the players involved in awarding credit or professional recognition, i.e. higher education institutions, Professional Bodies, and NCVQ is as close as possible. Consultation with regional representatives will continue as the programme evolves.

V QUALITY AND STANDARDS

Context

The process of accreditation raises many fundamental issues of teaching, learning, assessment, and not least of quality and standards. At the heart of the changes taking place in higher education is the move to extend educational opportunity to a much wider constituency of students than hitherto, to recognise and reward learning that takes place in a variety of settings and to develop a national framework which can meet the educational and training needs of the individual and of society at large.

It is important to recognise that accreditation is itself a quality issue. By international comparisons British universities have traditionally been good at educating a restricted elite of an 18-year-old age group, frequently the products of a fast track, sometimes socially privileged, and always specialised secondary education. The standards of the British first degree were the product of this system, intimately bound up, in the case of Oxbridge, with the residential principle, highly selective within a national framework which inevitably excluded many more than it included. There is now widespread recognition of the shortcomings of a model such as this as a basis for the mass higher education system of a modern democratic society in a competitive international environment

The participation of adults in higher education has been vastly increased by the work of the Open University, of the CNAA, and most recently of the new universities in extending access through flexible part-time as well as full-time modes, and with reference to vocational as well as traditional academic areas. The debate about national frameworks for credit recognition and assessment of learning in the workplace and community, as well as in a limited institutional context promises to take this process much further. It is in meeting diverse learning needs that University Continuing Education (UCE) is now attempting to fulfil its purpose and mission.

In seeking to maintain quality in the context of diversity, both HEFCE and FEFC have placed 'fitness for purpose' at the heart of their quality assurance and quality assessment models. This is of crucial importance to University Continuing Education whose mission is to provide higher education opportunities to adults in an extra-mural setting, on a part-time basis.

It is the process of accreditation that offers University Continuing Education the opportunity to develop a framework of provision which preserves and enlarges its traditional role in liberal adult education, offers scope for the development of more vocationally focused learning in response to local and national needs, and is in the interests of the individual student in recognising and awarding credit for learning wherever it occurs. As is clearly recognised by the Funding Councils, access, flexibility, credit and responsiveness are **quality** issues.

Quality in University Continuing Education

A structure for good practice in continuing education has been published by UACE (De Witt, 1993 and by HEQC, 1994). It places quality assurance at the centre of concern. This structure addresses the needs of departments such as

Cambridge that have grown out of the 'Responsible Body' tradition of extra-mural education and which now offer mainstreamed, credit-rated modular courses available to students of all ages and from all backgrounds.

The keynote of University CE, to which UACE has drawn attention, is the diversity and flexibility it offers. In adult education quality assurance depends heavily upon the local context. The Cambridge Board has a key 'mission' to provide a **diversity** of courses, increasingly in the context of accreditation and delivered in local centres with local partners including members of the Cambridge Local Centres Union, the WEA, LEAs, colleges, schools and adult/continuing education centres across the East Anglian Region.

Quality procedures work best when they are part of the normal operation of the institution. The Board has market-led provision and therefore has a need for a **user-based** perspective which recognises accountability, representation, access, choice and redress. In considering public accountability the question is not first of accountability to funding providers but to consumers of a public service and the community that the University serves. The extent to which the continuing educational services are readily available and easy to use by all who have the ability to benefit from them is strongly related to the University's mission.

The Mission of the Board of Continuing Education

The fundamental aim of the Cambridge Public Programmes Division is to provide education intended to equip the adult with a broad general culture. In principle all subjects are included since any subject may be taught in such a way as to achieve the aims of liberal education. The use of a dialectical form of teaching which acknowledges the value of each student's contribution is sought. A dialogue between tutor and student, the 'negotiation' of curriculum content, an approach based on equality and mutual learning and making the experience open to all are distinctive elements of the liberal tradition.

Quality assurance implies the application of key themes, according to UACE (1993), including fitness for purpose, a strategic and cohesive approach and a cycle of improvement. The Board's quality procedures must therefore be appropriate to its mission and purposes. **These purposes relate to the educational needs of the general public and the distinctive and different contribution the Board makes to the work of the University**. The level and type of work undertaken is distinctive but is not an analogue of an undergraduate degree and therefore quality procedures are needed which recognise and embody the educational values of continuing education and its own sense of excellence.

Comparisons with Traditional Forms of HE

Discussion focusing on 'quality' must address the key concerns of liberal adult education both **within** the wider University as well as beyond it. Taking undergraduate study as the main point of comparison, the development of critical faculties is a goal common to both adult education and to degree study. The student's contribution is recognised in both but the difference lies in the way it is judged and acknowledged. The most significant divergence between liberal adult education and undergraduate study is in the policy on access. Continuing Education operates an open access policy which is used for the pursuit of its aims.

A consequence of an open policy for admission, and the need to generate 'demand-led' courses for a large cohort of very diverse students, is that liberal adult education tends to deal in broad and wide-ranging perspectives compared with undergraduate study which, certainly at Cambridge, has emphasised specialisation and depth. These latter aims have been possible only because of a particular kind of secondary education and are being severely modified by the long term trend towards a balanced and general education. In the future it seems likely that most HE institutions will be offering courses of a more introductory nature at 'Foundation Level' (CATS levels 1 & 2) in a wide range of topics. The liberal adult education provision made by universities and its accreditation is thoroughly consistent with these trends.

Universities, it can be argued, have a responsibility to make their learning and research generally understood. There is tension over the extent to which it is possible, and of value, to introduce highly specialised fields of study to non-specialists. However, it is surely valid to suggest that universities test their work against 'the real world'. It is neither intellectually justifiable nor politically sensible to hide behind the cloak of arcane academic knowledge within the world of continuing education. Liberal adult education is a parallel path to learning achievement and is complementary to undergraduate teaching and learning. The distinctive nature of continuing education lies not in a repackaging of internal provision but in an emphasis on the distinctive educational values, types of learners and learning achievements of its adult students.

Assessment and Accreditation

Assessment is an integral part of learning and is therefore a component within each accredited course. Named Certificates and Diplomas of the Board of Continuing Education have specific assessment requirements for the successful completion of the course.

Course results are co-ordinated and reported through the Public Programmes Division and are received by the Board's Academic Committee. The framework for accrediting courses is approved by the University's Central Authorities and is based on HE CATS. Specific assessment proposals are required for each course within the Extension, Residential, Day-School and Study Tour programmes. The learning outcomes approach adopted by Public Programmes rests upon the production of a Personal Statement of Learning (PSL) involving the demonstration by each student of a range of agreed learning outcomes at CATS level 1 plus an assignment(s) supervised and verified by the course tutor.

Quality Assurance and Credit

Quality is assured across the range of undergraduate level courses through the use of an integrated approach to course proposals which requires the tutor to specify the learning outcomes of the course and the assessment criteria to be used. This clearly demonstrates to students the criteria by which achievement will be judged. Course results are moderated via the scheme of accreditation which has internal and external team membership.

Study for credit involves a complex set of arrangements which cover the following issues:

- credit transfer
- credit accumulation

- credit type (general and specific)
- credit equivalence and exchange
- uniformity of credit.

In order to recruit students to study on credit-bearing courses it is necessary to be clear about what they are to be offered. Credit enables learning outcomes to be acknowledged and facilitates assessment of those outcomes. In order to apply quality assurance procedures to the award of credit, the units of credit offered must relate clearly to standard agreements on the issues listed above. Credit cannot easily exist within a single institution and therefore credit offered within a single academic subject/discipline will need to conform to a departmental organisation of credit which has uniformity and coherence and, most importantly, is recognised within regional and national credit systems and frameworks which guarantee standards of comparability and quality.

Whilst there is no nation-wide body to provide quality assurance, the approved Cambridge accreditation scheme has close links with other universities to moderate the whole scheme and to assure quality both in teaching and learning outcomes within credit recognition and transfer agreements.

Standards

The issue of standards is sometimes confused, and equated exclusively with the issue of quality. The latter embraces a wide range of factors, including standards, which together influence the total educational experience of students - access, flexibility of provision, accreditation and opportunities for progression, the quality of teaching, the learning environment and resources for learning, as well as other factors. Standards are usually associated with student performance in the context of the assessment of learning, traditionally related in higher education to the classification system of the British first degree. The move to diversify the system, however, provokes in some quarters an outcry that standards are falling. But what are these standards? Even within the narrow circle of conventional academic undergraduate study it is evident that the concept of absolute standards is an elusive one.

Not only is it clear that standards vary greatly between universities, as evidenced by the wide variation in the statistical probability of gaining a first, upper second, lower second etc; but that this same variation applies to classification distributions between subjects, e.g. the tendency of social sciences, languages and humanities to have more compact distributions with fewer firsts and thirds than the physical and mathematical sciences, engineering and technology. Even within a discipline it is evident that a range of factors determine performance in assessment and that the standards cannot be described as absolute.

If the concept of standards is problematic within the confines of a single discipline - and there are factors which may well affect issues of performance against standards, eg age, ethnicity, educational and social background etc., - the great diversity of provision, students and settings of University Continuing Education makes the notion of absolute and common standards at the very least imprecise, and the notion of level problematic (see Robertson, 1994, p 130-132).

In dealing with these difficult questions, what guidelines, for staff and students alike, might be appropriate in establishing a framework for broad notions of standards? Some of the factors involved may be conceptualised as follows:

1. Fitness for purpose applies to standards as well as to the larger issue of quality. Thus, it is not helpful to seek to relate the written output of the young, fast track Oxbridge undergraduate, honed on the essay writing tradition of Arts A levels and Tripos preparation, to adult learning designed to broaden horizons, for personal and professional reasons, often in a new field of study or area of experience. As has been noted, the Board of Continuing Education operates at the interface of the University with a wider public and its mission complements rather than replicates that of the University in its undergraduate provision. In terms of standards, there are helpful parallels with other mature providers including the Open University. As elsewhere, Cambridge standards are ultimately relative to the nature and purpose of the activity, and for the Board to the purpose and context of its provision.

2. Whilst tutors are in a crucial position to make judgements about the quality of learning of individual students, the requirement of students themselves to reflect upon their own learning is highly appropriate for mature, adult learners and an important element in accreditation. It is from the totality of the staff and student judgements concerning the assessment of learning outcomes that criteria and evidence for standards can be established.

3. It is important to remember that much of the Board's provision is or will be accredited at Foundation Level (CATS Level 1) which equates broadly to the beginning phase of undergraduate study. Those who have taught mature students in the early phase of their higher education will be aware of the great variation in the form and quality of their work, often followed by great advances over a period of time. Nevertheless, early learning experiences are crucial to later intellectual development. The learning outcomes model with appropriate forms of assessment allows for the establishment of standards which are truly fit for purpose. At the end of the day, judgement of the individual tutor, in an accreditation framework, and within agreed procedures for moderation and external scrutiny, must form the basis for standards. Thus staff development to establish shared concepts of quality assurance and common understanding of CATS level standards represents a crucial element in the maintenance of quality.

VI EVALUATION

Preface

The Employment Department Guide (1994) *Evaluating Development in Higher Education*, identifies a number of core questions which should be addressed in all project reports, namely:

- **Was the planned work carried out?** to time? to the scale agreed?
- To what extent was **each objective** achieved, and what are the reasons for over and under-achievement?
- Has experience to date indicated **new hypotheses or problems** which need to be addressed during the life of the Project and, if so, will this call for the diversion of resources?
- What issues have been identified for **future development work,** embedding or research?
- How far did the work represent **value for money**? Did the Project generate resources additional to the Department funding? Was this level of expenditure necessary to achieve the outcomes?

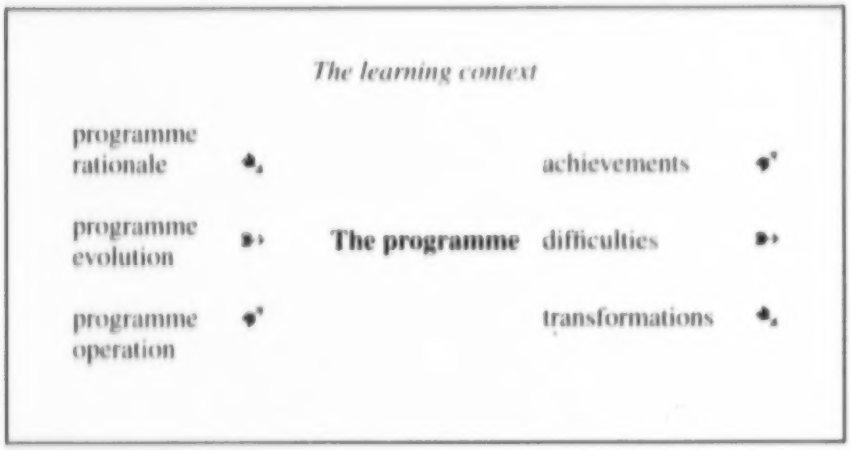
Additionally, Project evaluation needs to take note of issues arising from the Theme Evaluator's 'Interim Report on Credit Frameworks and Learning Outcomes' (CLEO) projects (McDowell, November 1994) which raises wide-ranging questions related to the process of change in higher education. Finally, and most importantly, evaluation must focus on the way in which the Project has addressed the central objectives set out in the original Project proposal. What follows is an attempt to address all three groups of questions - Employment Department, Theme Evaluation, Project Objectives - in the section headed Project Outcomes, broadly under the headings of core questions identified in the Employment Department Guide. This is preceded by initial comment on the Evaluation Framework and Methodology, and the related Evidence Base.

Framework and Methodology

Since the Project was designed to last one year only, whilst the accreditation process is potentially ambitious in scope and scale, it is clear that it is **feasibility** that has been tested and not a comprehensive programme of activity. Even within the pilot framework, there is no claim to full evaluation of outcomes and achievements. It is the Project's methods and analysis which will yield lessons for other providers, rather than full scheme evaluation. One principal consequence has been that each member of the Project Team has taken responsibility for the evaluation of outcomes in a particular area. Staff on pilot courses have been encouraged to monitor the response of students to the introduction of assessment and other aspects of accreditation, and to record and share their own experience of the pilot phase.

All members of the Project team have been involved in gathering evidence. Each of the pilot classes has been visited by a member of the team, and in each case there has been dialogue with students and staff. Evaluation methodology, therefore, has drawn on well-established traditions of 'institutional self-evaluation' (Adelman & Alexander, 1982), and of 'illuminative evaluation' (Parlett & Hamilton, 1981).

Institutional self-evaluation emphasises the responsibility of individuals and groups **within** institutions to monitor and evaluate the process of change with which they are associated, and to share judgements about outcomes with each other. The tradition of 'illuminative evaluation' is set within the anthropological and qualitative, rather than psychometric and quantitative, research paradigm. Its fundamental purpose is to illuminate problems and issues, and in this case, methods and procedures which may provide lessons for other workers in the field. It thus focuses on the importance of the context in which change is implemented and in which learning occurs, and on process, as well as on input and outcomes. A recent restatement of the importance of this tradition in the field of open and distance learning is Calder (1994), summarised in the following simple model:



These evaluation traditions are particularly appropriate in the present instance, due to:

- the short timescale of the Project, to which reference has already been made, the difficulty of being precise about outcomes over such a short period, and the requirement to draft what must remain an interim report after only ten months activity and a limited period of testing;
- the developmental nature of accreditation procedures which are constantly being modified and refined in the light of experience, drawing on responses from staff and students; changes which will eventually be consolidated in a Tutor Manual, a longer-term Project outcome;
- the inherent difficulty of measuring the extent and nature of cultural change, given the diverse settings and varied personnel involved in the process of accreditation;
- the fundamental need to identify issues and differing value positions, whilst moving the system forward on pragmatic lines, acknowledging that innovation takes place against a background of rapid change in higher education;
- the difficulty of isolating changes directly attributable to an interventionist and developmental project of this kind, when to some extent, change occurs anyway as a result of a process of 'osmosis' (see Burke, 1991), through which ideas and practices seep into the system from outside, often reflected in changes in language, which are initially dismissed as 'jargon' but which in time gain in acceptability as part of a common interpretative framework of educational activity.

Evidence Base

Each section of the report and the evaluation which follows draws upon a substantial Evidence Base gathered by the Project team, and held on file, namely:

Committee Minutes, Aide-Memoires and Working Papers of:
Project Team (consisting of four members - five since the 1 January 1995 - which has had 37 meetings, on a weekly basis from March 1994 to February 1995);
Tutor Group (with an active membership of around 12, and has met six times);
Steering Committee (membership 12, which has met on three occasions).

Course Evaluation Evidence
Summer University (July/August 1994) including PSL forms and student assignments;
Weekend Residential Programme (January 1995) - selection of PSLs and assignments and tutor course reports (5 courses);
Extension Programme (Five 10-week courses, September to December 1994) including three PSLs and three assignments per course.

Reports of Team Visits to Tutors and Students on Pilot Courses
Evidence from 37 visits by members of the Project Team.

Staff Development Events
Reports to Steering Committee of four events.

Miscellaneous Correspondence from Tutors and Students
Including notes of discussions on accreditation issues.

Theme Evaluation
Interim Theme Report (presented to Steering Committee on 27 October 1994).

Certificate in Personal and Professional Development
Working papers presented to the Project Team and Steering Committee;
Breakfast Seminar notes.

Consultation and Dissemination Papers and Events
e.g. ED Network information - CLEO;
SEEC Project papers;
Universities of Bradford, London and Oxford;
Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE).

Project Outcomes

Evaluation is addressed to the three groups of questions raised at the beginning of this section, i.e. Employment Department core questions, some questions arising from the Theme Evaluation, and Project Objectives set out in the Project proposal.

Planned Work - the Process of Change

Evaluators are asked to consider whether the **planned work** was carried out, to time, and on the scale agreed? The response of the Project team is affirmative in answer to all three questions. Theme Evaluation, however, raises wider issues concerning the process of change. Indeed some of the key lessons of the Project relate to the nature of the change strategy and the change process. In summary, the essence of the strategy was as follows:

- a commitment to a pilot programme, followed by full-scale implementation in 1995/96, which has kept the Project within manageable proportions, and

at the same time provided sufficient evidence to identify problems and outcomes;

- an invitation to Cambridge Local Centres, WEA Branches, and individual tutors to volunteer, rather than be coerced into the testing of accreditation practice and procedures;
- regular meetings of the Project team, the establishment of a Consultative Tutor Group, and formal reporting to the Steering Committee at regular intervals;
- formal credit agreements with other University Departments of Continuing Education - e.g. Oxford, East Anglia and Essex - and with the Open University; and ongoing collaboration with the SEEC Project, to provide a developing regional credit framework;
- locally, a series of staff development events through which staff can begin to explore common problems, and encouragement to staff tutors and others to initiate subject-specific events, and to work with tutors informally wherever possible
- encouragement to tutors to innovate within an agreed curriculum framework but with wide discretion over the methods and forms of assessment appropriate to particular subjects and settings;
- briefing meetings at the outset by members of the Project team to pilot tutors, and visits to all pilot courses during December 1994/January 1995 to provide support, share experiences, and gather evidence as a basis for interim evaluation findings;
- the exploration of the potential for accrediting both academic and vocational learning through a new Certificate in Personal and Professional Development, in collaboration with the Cambridge Programme for Industry, and the establishment of a separate joint development team;
- consultation with the wider world of business, industry and the professions through a series of Breakfast Seminars, with funding support from Cambs TEC, on the theme of Education, Training and Employment;
- commitment to ongoing dissemination and a free exchange of information with other providers, including presentations to conferences at both the London and Oxford Departments of Continuing Education in May 1994, and to the SRHE annual conference in December.

The Project therefore generated a substantial amount of activity, consultation and curriculum innovation in a relatively short period. The tutors on pilot courses worked hard to grapple with the problems of accreditation in the field, and the contribution of tutor members of the Project group must be acknowledged. There is now a substantial body of experience from which to learn as a basis for the full implementation phase which must follow.

It is important to note that Cambridge University has no tradition of part-time education for the public except through the Board of Continuing Education, and that the concept of credit frameworks and learning outcomes is not strongly embedded in the University's culture. This has placed certain constraints on Project activity in the shorter term, but arguably the Project has stimulated and supported a significant degree of change and innovation which would not have otherwise occurred. There have been genuine efforts to share openly with others the ongoing fruits of the Project, acknowledging both the problematic nature, and potential benefits of the accreditation process for adult learners.

Achievement of Objectives

The Project proposal summarises aims and objectives under three broad headings of intended outcomes - Frameworks for Credit, Institutional and Curriculum Development, and the Development and Dissemination of a Model for a Credit System. The deliberations of the Project suggest that a credit framework for adult learners is both feasible, and desirable in principle, facilitating the recognition of learning that takes place on LAE courses, and offering opportunities for progression for individual students. The Board's Certificate in Continuing Education provides an agreed framework which has enabled supportive agreements to be negotiated with other HE providers. The accreditation of vocational, as well as academic learning, within a single framework, is a longer term enterprise for adult and continuing education, but significant progress has been made in developing the new Certificate in Personal and Professional Development.

A range of objectives relating to institutional and curriculum development have been met through the pilot programme as indicated earlier in this report. The development of administrative procedures and processes to support a credit framework within the Board of Continuing Education has been one significant outcome of the Project. Slower progress has been made in identifying and developing management information and student record systems to support a framework for credit, and counselling and guidance services that will be needed in the future. However, these are now part of the agenda for future consideration as the process of accreditation is extended to all LAE courses. The application of a detailed and labour intensive system of student and staff registration through the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) took place at the same period as the Project. Externally driven management information requirements, related to credit bearing continuing education, students and courses, pose serious challenges to recruitment and registration systems, and have severe resource implications.

Throughout the Project, the development and dissemination of a credit model were ongoing. The Tutor Group acted as a useful internal forum for the discussion of issues arising from the pilot courses, and there was ongoing consultation and dissemination with other HE providers and national and regional networks, e.g. Credit Frameworks and Learning Outcomes Network (CLEO), South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC), Further Education Unit (FEU), Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), Unit for Adult and Continuing Education (UACE) and the East Anglian Post-16 Credit Framework Group.

Hypotheses and Problems

The central thrust of the Project was to demonstrate the feasibility of credit for adult learners but also to acknowledge and record the real problems of implementation for both staff and students. It became evident that the central hypothesis of accrediting learning in adult and continuing education depends, for its implementation, upon a number of key factors:

- the willingness of LAE students to accept some element of assessment as part of the normal process of learning;
- the ability of tutors to develop and apply accreditation that meets criteria of practicality and does justice to the traditions of LAE;
- the development of 'user friendly' forms of assessment that are firmly integrated into the learning process and, at the same time, meet appropriate standards criteria;

- The commitment of tutors to incorporate credit into an active learning process which demonstrates learning outcomes.

The Project team paid particular attention to gathering evidence of student attitudes, and to staff experience of accreditation. For example, the Personal Statements of Learning are a rich source of evidence of the student experience of accreditation on the pilot courses. It is important to note that the PSLs represent 'snapshots of a moving picture', taken at a particular point in time, and that the Project documentation was subject to emendation, as experience was fed back to the Project Team. PSLs are available for the Summer University and for ten-week courses which finished in December 1994 but they are not available for the twenty-week courses which continue until March 1995. In the latter case, each of these courses was visited by a member of the Project team, and student comment was recorded and taken into account in the ongoing evaluation process.

Student Perspectives

It is fair to say that student views on pilot courses displayed the kind of scepticism and uncertainty which might be expected in the context of changes in the culture of LAE of the kind described. Responses to accreditation varied between 'cheerful pragmatism', 'glum acceptance' and 'positive welcome'. There were those who indicated that they have absolutely no desire for credit and strongly dislike the prospect of any element of assessment, but there is evidence that some students were beginning to appreciate the potential value of credit and the stimulus to learning that assessment may represent. The PSL was the prism through which students' experiences and expectations of accreditation were refracted.

The Personal Statement of Learning has three sections. The first is **'Personal Learning and Progress'**. Overall, this section of the PSL contained considered, reflective and highly positive comments about the knowledge and self-knowledge gained from both the formal tuition and the informal discussion and social interaction on the course. Confidence, inspiration, rekindled enthusiasm and a desire to go on learning recurred as the most common 'gains', together with the development of a more critical stance, greater appreciation of different interpretations of a subject and the benefits of an encouraging and stimulating environment. Tutors were very frequently mentioned and praised for their expertise, enthusiasm and encouragement. The (very few) negative comments in this section related mainly to a dislike of forms *per se*, or to the difficulty of reflecting on a residential course of only two or three days duration.

The PSL section **'Progression ... where now?'** again contained very many positive comments about taking study further, including first degree or Masters level study. The Madingley Summer University was clearly of benefit to those already taking or hoping to take an Open University degree, or an external degree elsewhere. There were also many references to taking elements of the course further, for example creating a portfolio of photographic and other visual material, learning Greek, researching the history of one's own village, writing a play for radio or making a film. Personal development featured more heavily than career development and this was especially true for older learners.

The third section of the form asks students to give their own estimation, using a prescribed one-to-five scale, of the progress they have made in meeting the planned learning outcomes, and to indicate the means by which they demonstrated 'success' in meeting these outcomes, e.g. through an oral presentation, a project, an essay or poem, field work etc. Most students indicated

a high level of progress (at least three on the scale), many qualified their self-assessment by stating that they felt that they began from an unusually low or high level which affected their rate of progress towards the learning outcomes defined. Some reluctance to 'quantify' learning was expressed, but there was very little refusal to do so on the revised form which was introduced after the first two Summer University courses. Of the fourteen options for assessment activities, all had been used, except 'peer assessment'.

It is evident that concepts such as the reflective learner and the assessment of learning outcomes are strange ones for some traditional students, and that the idea of completing a proforma such as the PSL at the end of the course, seems time-wasting and unnecessary. This is especially true where student expectation relates chiefly to the enjoyment of a series of lectures without a strong commitment to a participative and interactive mode of learning. At the extreme, learning outcomes were dismissed as 'jargon' and it is interesting to note the rationale for this position:

> *'Outcomes' were not among my reasons for attending the course.*
>
> *I felt no need to demonstrate my 'success'.*
>
> *I feel no need to justify myself. I didn't join the class to prove anything to anybody. I joined because it sounded interesting - which it was.*

This must be set against the broad acceptance by most students of the need to demonstrate learning outcomes, in the context of the Higher Education Funding Council's policy of linking the distribution of public funding to the issue of accountability.

Equally, on issues of assessment, a range of value positions were demonstrated by students. Few welcomed the prospect, in the first instance, of additional work, although there are good examples of an enthusiastic response where assessment was built into class activities. There was a good deal of scepticism, some refusal to entertain assessment in principle as being alien to the traditions of LAE, but also some positive comments revealed on the PSLs, for example:

> *I have written an essay for the first time in many years. Even if the result was not very good, it was useful experience.*
>
> *It is only when you write things down, you begin to order your thoughts.*
>
> *I used to come just for recreation but I am quite enjoying the additional challenge of doing the assignments.*
>
> *I have definitely found what I wanted to do for the foreseeable future - tease out the history of my village. The thought of translating documents never before translated is very exciting.*
>
> *My days of formal study are over (I am nearly 70) but writing at home may keep senility at bay. I could well find myself attending further similar courses to keep myself amused en route to the crematorium.*

In discussion with students on pilot courses, some expressed the belief that accreditation was essentially an attempt by government 'to close classes by the back door', and there was a good deal of ambivalence towards the issue of public subsidy for LAE classes. There may be some students who might prefer to pay more if there were no assessment implications but there are very many who are willing to adopt a pragmatic approach in order to preserve the pattern of LAE provision to which they are highly committed. The continuing high levels of attendance at classes is itself an indication of the value that they place upon

them, and is one manifestation of the learning that takes place. There is growing acceptance that students must demonstrate this learning formally if the case for continued public subsidy is to be secured.

Staff Perspectives

One clear finding of the Project is that the successful introduction of accreditation depends critically on the goodwill, skill, flexibility, and diplomacy of the tutor. It is evident that many established LAE tutors have reservations about the desirability of accreditation, but tutors on pilot courses worked hard to minimise the difficulties and to use it to enhance, where possible, the educational experience of students. There are a number of fundamental consequences of the accreditation process for tutors, some of which have already been noted in relation to assessment, and which must be reiterated in the context of evaluation :

- an increase in workload, for example in the setting and marking of assignments, and in the recording of information;
- a need for staff development, inevitably involving tutor time, which remains problematic for many part-time tutors;
- skill in integrating assessment into the teaching and learning process which frequently requires the provision of additional source materials for analysis by students;
- awareness that the assessment of older students poses special problems, especially a fear of written work which may not have been undertaken for many years;
- recognition that students of all ages may need careful guidance and tutorial support which is difficult to provide, especially with large classes, and without eating into teaching time;
- uncertainty about the standards of work that may be embraced within the concept of CATS Level 1 or the more advanced CATS Levels;
- unease at the implications of assessment for the tutor/student relationship.

One tutor commented that:

> *Assessment seems to have had a bad effect generally on* [the] *class. .... Sadly, the shadow of assessment seems to effect some people more than I ever anticipated and it threatens to sour the fun of the meetings and the wonder of the subject. The job of the tutor becomes more demanding ....*

There were varying perceptions of the implications of assessment:

> *There has been an enthusiastic atmosphere of interest ... and remarks have been made that they appreciate that the discipline of working towards assessment could provide a fuller/deeper experience of the course content ...* [but] *they are extraordinarily diffident not only about their writing skills but also about their handicap as they often see it of being too old or not of a high enough standard academically, even when they have been college trained and have a degree!*

In another instance, the comment was offered:

> *I think it has got to be said much more explicitly that assessment will be non-threatening and - who knows - fun. There are real fears out there that people will be made to feel small or will have to give formal presentations (which terrifies a lot of people).*

Tutors acknowledged feasibility, benefits, and dangers:

> *It was possible to assess all students' performance in a number of areas in a variety of ways and therefore possible to accredit all of them. By the end of the course students' fears about accreditation were, to a large extent allayed, although their accurate perception that different tutors might approach the subject in different ways still gives them cause for concern.*

Evidence of real progress was acknowledged:

> *All of them seem to have made considerable progress over the ten weeks of the programme, gradually writing more and more under their own steam on unseen material.*

A Staff Tutor commented on the impact of accreditation:

> *The group accepted the idea with little demure. Of those who attended regularly, only two failed to complete PSLs or submit assignments . . . The overall result looks satisfactory - a reasonable proportion of successful completions and no great protests. Certainly we achieved a well above average output of written work of acceptable standard. I detect a certain amount of 'going through the motions' in the PSLs, giving us the answers they think we would like. The same may apply in ringing numbers on 'Progress', but I have chosen examples fairly. Three was the lowest number ringed on any and that on only two.*

Tutor explanation of the philosophy underlying the PSL and its completion seems to work without too much difficulty on ten and twenty-week courses but there are clearly greater difficulties on residential weekend courses which are much more compressed in time. Once again the significance of the tutor's role in interpreting and explaining the processes of accreditation as an intrinsic part of the course cannot be overstated.

Subject-based staff development, as exemplified by meetings of part-time tutors in local history, indicates that in this area tutors possess a fund of knowledge and experience which can be built upon to develop forms of assessment which involve the analysis of source material central to the discipline. Staff development of this kind is needed across all subject areas. The work in local history is a good example of the way in which support and guidance from specialists in the field may be used to disseminate assessment possibilities in a discipline or field of study.

Resources, Funding and Value for Money

Employment Department guidance indicates a need to consider resource implications, value for money and to record the input of additional resources from elsewhere. Over and above the Project, it is evident that the Board of Continuing Education has made a significant resource input to support the accreditation process. In the long run, assessment, recording of student progress and the need for student guidance will require additional resources to support accredited courses.

In the case of the Certificate in Personal and Professional Development, the Project managed to secure a small input of funding from CambsTEC to support the Madingley Seminar consultation exercise which took place between November 1994 and January 1995. In the accreditation of academic and vocational learning in the future, there are likely development costs as well as

major benefits in enlarging student opportunity and recognising the learning that takes place.

Judgements about value for money are difficult to make in a Project of this kind and are perhaps more appropriately addressed at a summative phase of evaluation, or later with the benefit of hindsight. Arguably, for a relatively small input of funding, the Project stimulated change and innovation on a scale disproportionate to the external resource input.

Future Development Work

From Pilot to Full Implementation

The accreditation of pilot courses in the LAE programme has resulted in an agenda for curriculum change which will extend well beyond the timespan of the Project. The most urgent task which emerges from the evaluation is to prepare for the implementation phase of accrediting some 350 of the Board's courses from summer 1995 and monitoring carefully the impact of accreditation on a much bigger scale than in the pilot feasibility phase. In terms of a new initiative in accrediting academic/vocational learning, the new Certificate in Personal and Professional Development will be launched in 1995/96 and will need careful preparation and monitoring.

The Need for Guidance

As University Continuing Education departments move to a system of credit bearing courses and as more students opt to take higher education courses for the professional benefits they can bring, the need for student guidance over course choices and progression increases. In a time of limited resources, it is important that continuing education institutions do not duplicate guidance services better provided elsewhere, e.g. by the Careers Service, but they are best placed to advise students on entry to a newly accredited programme and the progression pathways within it. If course completion is to become important in the funding mechanism of Higher Education as in Further Education, continuing education departments need to ensure successful student retention as far as possible. Adequate provision of pre-entry and on-course guidance is the key to this, within the flexible programmes offered in a credit-based system.

There are a number of problems with the provision of guidance. In the first place the scattered nature of provision, particularly for the Board of Continuing Education which serves centres spread across five counties, means that a centralised face-to-face guidance service such as that found in some FE colleges, is not practical, even if the resources for it could be found. Most students are likely to contact the Board by telephone and administrative staff should be trained to extend the course information service they already provide. For more specialist guidance,a telephone help-line might be possible but this would need to be widely publicised to encourage students to take advantage of it. Such a service could be impartial and refer students elsewhere as appropriate but it is more likely that it would be impartial only as far as the full range of options available within the institution are concerned. However, it is important to see guidance not as a marketing function but as a professional activity in its own right, the ethical boundaries of which should be respected.

It has become apparent that the demand for on-course guidance increases significantly within accredited courses. As students face assessment, their involvement with their learning increases and tutors have been obliged to spend

more time in advising students on their progress and achievements. As the interface between the Board of Continuing Education and the students, tutors have also faced requests for advice on progression and other appropriate learning opportunities. Part-time tutors are generally not paid or trained to provide this type of assistance and this is an area where the allocation of resources and training should be considered.

The provision of any formal guidance process, open to all students, has major resource implications. Even if this is limited to tutorial advice and a general telephone help-line, the costs of training and staffing are significant, particularly when accreditation is imposing other strains on administrative and academic resources. One way to alleviate the resource problem is to partner other providers of guidance or share the financial burden with other local HE institutions. This clearly raises questions of competition but could be a way forward for some departments.

The Need for Staff Development

Staff development has played an important part in supporting staff involved in pilot courses. All staff were initially briefed by members of the Project team and follow-up evaluation visits have sought to continue the dialogue, taking into account student reactions to the introduction of accreditation and tutor experience of the process. There have been four formal evaluation events for part-time tutors - an initial half-day event focusing on Learning Outcomes and Assessment, held in May 1994; an evening session on Group Based Learning in November 1994; a half-day event, also in November, on the Cambridge accreditation scheme and methods of assessment; and a subject specific meeting for part-time tutors in Local History which focused on assessment issues in this area.

It is evident that a substantial programme of staff development will be needed to support the full implementation phase of accreditation from September 1995. Tutors who have been involved in the Pilot phase need continuing subject specific development with particular reference to assessment strategies. Tutors who will be involved for the first time in credit implementation will need support which is both general - with reference to the principles and procedures of credit and learning outcomes - and subject specific. Administrative and assessment procedures need to be incorporated into a revised Tutor Manual. Attention needs to be given to the changing role of the tutor with reference to guidance, and to the needs of administrative and secretarial staff who may be required to provide a variety of guidance services to students. A recognition of the changing role of the tutor and the need for the Board to be responsive to tutor feedback in identifying future staff development needs, is an important conclusion to be drawn from the Project.

A Skills Framework for Continuing Education

Another major outcome of Project activity is the identification of the need for a skills framework for continuing education to complement work that has been undertaken in other educational phases and settings. What is needed is a framework which identifies the core skills that are appropriate for adult, life-long learning and links these to the skills acquired in work-based learning. Such a framework might underpin a model of both personal and professional development, and embrace the contribution of LAE to society and to the local and national economy, as well as its traditional focus on the concerns of the individual. The development of a theoretical framework and the acquisition of empirical evidence resulting from fieldwork would contribute significantly to the national agenda for educational innovation. The extension of core skills into

higher education could provide an opportunity to develop a new form of certification of great significance to adult learners. Likewise, the extension of NVQs to the higher levels presents opportunities for a credit framework of great significance for life-long personal and professional development.

The Project indicates both the feasibility of credit for adult learners and the existing cultural barriers to the development of a learning society. University adult and continuing education has a key role to play in this process. The intention of the Project was to illuminate the issues and to move the agenda forward. It may be argued, given the limited timescale of the Project, that it represents 'the end of the beginning'. But perhaps a more suitable epitaph would be the words of T S Eliot:

'What we call the beginning is often the end

And to make an end is to make a beginning'

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Professor David Bridges	University of East Anglia
Dr Gaie Davidson	University of Kent
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Mr Roger Mills	The Open University
Dr Christopher Padfield	Programme for Industry
Mr Geoff Plummer	CambsTEC
Mr Trevor Rowley	University of Oxford
Mr Keith Smith	Employment Department
Mr Tony Watts	NICEC
Dr Don Wilson	The Open University

The Tutor Group

Dr Mark Bailey	Staff Tutor (Local and Regional Studies)
Mr John Cowell	Part-time Tutor (Religion)
Dr Rosemary Horrox	Part-time Tutor (Medieval History)
Mr Graham Howes	Staff Tutor (Social and Political Sciences)
Mrs Janet Keystone	Part-time Tutor (Art History)
Dr Dawn Lewcock	Part-time Tutor (Literature)
Miss Sue Oosthuizen	Part-time Tutor (Local History)
Dr Roland Randall	Staff Tutor (Biological Sciences)
Dr Mike Sewell	Staff Tutor (Modern History)
Mrs Gillian Sheail	Part-time Tutor (Geology and Landscape)
Dr David Trump	Staff Tutor (Archaeology)

Others

Mrs Nesta Evans	Part-time Tutor (Local History)
Mrs Annabel Holland	Office Services Administrator
Mr Cyril Pritchett	Finance Officer
Miss Susan Rawlings	Warden, Madingley Hall and Deputy Secretary, Board of Continuing Education
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Mrs Liz Whittle	Project Secretary

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